



IN THE LAND OF ART

WORKS OF
VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ

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IN THE LAND OF ART

(EN EL PAÍS DEL ARTE)

BY

VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION BY

FRANCES DOUGLAS



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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

NO apology need be made for having prepared *En El País Del Arte* for publication in English. Not only are the author's descriptions of the works of art, the cathedrals, the museums, the cities seen in Italy during his travels through that country so interesting as to demand translation for the pleasure of his readers in the United States and England, but the book is also a strong human document, casting a vivid light upon the temperament and intellectual development of Vicente Blasco Ibáñez. At the same time it carries a message to those who find themselves in difficult circumstances. Many a man would have been thrown into despair at being exiled from his native land, with empty pockets in an unfamiliar country, but Blasco Ibáñez, like the indomitable Spanish conquerors in America, yielded to no obstacles, and worked his way through.

His visit to the Certosa di Pavia, when the curator invited him to write in the album kept for visitors of note, and his hesitation to inscribe his "unknown name," and again on visiting Edmondo de Amicis, the object of his youthful hero-worship, his perturbation when the famous Italian author received him as a companion, as "one worthy of him," revealed his innate modesty. The picture of Blasco Ibáñez, poor and obsequious in the presence of the great man, uncon-

scious of his destiny to produce novels that should win him wider renown than was ever attained by the author of *Cuore,* is another demonstration of man's inability to foresee what the fates are spinning for him.

Whatever ignominy may have been heaped upon Blasco Ibáñez by his countrymen in the past, his genius has conquered all classes in his homeland to-day. His writings were easily the most popular in Spain even before he won wide recognition abroad. He had furthermore sat as a deputy in the Spanish Cortes, and had declined a ministerial portfolio. Returning after his startling triumph in the United States, he was acclaimed wherever he went as the man of the hour, and the newspapers featured his movements from day to day. For three months he was the lion of innumerable banquets and festivities in his honour, not only in his home town of Valencia but all over Spain. Streets and squares were renamed for him, and triumphal arches were erected to welcome him. The man who, twenty-five years before, had been persecuted by the police and forced to flee for his life, who had suffered imprisonment for his political ideas, was presented with the coat of arms and the freedom of his native city as a climax to days given over to celebration of his universal triumph. Wherever he made his appearance the streets were blocked with a solid mass of people, and the police were compelled to protect him from being literally crushed by his admirers. This recalls that when he visited the House of Representatives at Washington in the spring of 1920 he chanced to arrive only a minute before twelve o'clock, the hour for con-

vening Congress, and so eager were the lawmakers to see and greet this literary hero that for half an hour it was impossible to muster a quorum.

Conditions have indeed changed for Blasco Ibáñez, and the power of interpretation shown in this book, and the resistless enthusiasm with which he sweeps his readers with him into a new appreciation of artistic Italy, also reveal the inner spirit that has led to his brilliant success. It is this spirit of mastery that has guided him in the minute study of every subject that he has turned into a revelation first of Spain and then of the contending nations along the Marne. It was this quality that enabled him to create an enduring masterpiece in his study of the bullfight and its reaction upon the Spanish character. Those who see him now in assured triumph could scarcely realise the satisfaction that he gained from the literary, if not broadly popular success of this great work, now entitled in English *Blood and Sand*, when I first presented a translation of *Sangre y Arena* to the American people in 1911. The hearty appreciation accorded it by the critics, and above all by William Dean Howells, to whose attention it had been drawn by Henry Mills Alden, was the promise of that wider recognition which has since been so splendidly fulfilled.

FRANCES DOUGLAS.

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TO MY AMERICAN READERS

THIS book has a history.

In 1896 Spain was involved in a war in Cuba against the native sons of the country who desired their independence, and also a project was being agitated in the United States for an armed intervention to put an end to this war, so that the Cubans might be enabled to separate definitely from their ancient metropolis or mother country in order to form a new American republic.

I, though a Spaniard, was a partisan of the independence of Cuba, since it was impossible for me to understand for what reason, seeing that the other Spanish-speaking American peoples had become emancipated, Cuba should remain an exception, eternally bound to that European land which for so long a time had served as its mother. Moreover, as a federal republican, I have always looked with sympathy upon the United States as an outstanding and eloquent example of the correctness of my doctrines, and I was opposed to any clash between my country and the great Republic.

The inevitable antagonism between my beliefs and those of the great part of my fellow citizens naturally proved disastrous to me, as ever happens when a minority struggles against the blindness of the huge majority, confused and deaf to reason. A mass-meet-

ing which I organised in Valencia against the war in Cuba and against a possible war with the United States degenerated into a revolutionary uprising, in the course of which many shots were exchanged between the people and the gendarmes, resulting in numerous casualties.

I had to flee from my country, not only because my liberty was in danger after this event, but because my life itself was threatened as a consequence of the indignation of those in power at the moment, and it was prudent to await the passing of time to reëstablish calm.

I lived for some weeks in hiding on the coast near Valencia, waiting for an opportunity to escape, and at length I was able to accomplish this in a steamer leaving for Genoa, utilising a disguise, and enduring discomforts and misfortunes equal to those suffered by the heroes of tales of adventure.

Dressed as a sailor, my hands and face blackened with coal, and carrying a heavy sack on my shoulders, I succeeded in setting out in the gathering darkness in a small boat from the port of Valencia, passing through cordons of police who continually watched the departure of ships in the hope of capturing me sooner or later.

I waited until late at night outside the port, on the open sea, until the steamer, which had nearly finished taking on her cargo, should come out, and in the dense darkness I managed to draw up to the vessel and climb aboard by a rope-ladder which they threw over for me. I was then only twenty-eight years of age, and no mat-

ter how sad my adventures might be I always looked at life through the rosy mists of dawn.

With no other clothes than my dirty sailor's garments, and with a modest sum of money as my only capital, I started on this flight which to-day might perhaps give me serious concern, but which at that time was to me a marvellous journey. I say in the first lines of my book that I embarked in a French steamer called "The Rights of Man." This was a convenient fabrication to avoid bringing dangerous consequences upon the valiant captain who desired to save me by receiving me into his ship; but in reality this boat was a Spanish steamer called "Sagunto," which was bound for Italy, touching on the way at various ports.

Still wearing my sailor's garb, I went ashore at Cette, at Marseilles, and at Leghorn, before arriving at Genoa. It was my choice, contrary to the wishes of the captain and other officers, to live the same simple life as the common seamen. In each port I went with the cook and the ship's-boy to the market in the town to buy provisions for the crew, finding a new and original charm in this humble and varied existence.

On arriving at Genoa I bought myself a suit and a little underclothing which I put in a hand valise, with many books and much paper for writing. With this humble equipage I bade farewell to my companions of the voyage, and I started forth to run over Italy, the land of art, which for the first time I was about to see.

Actually I cannot explain to myself how I was able to make this journey with so little money. For three months I went from place to place over the Italian

Peninsula, in a dizzy whirl, wishing to see everything without delay, receiving impressions like cascades swollen from incessant rains, stopping to study some things and divining others, in such manner that, rather than merely coming to know Italy, what I did was to immerse myself in it.

During this adventurous journey, many times I found myself without the means for going on, but that mysterious Providence which watches over artists and over all improvident beings filled with trust and imagination, always intervened at the last moment, providing me with new resources for continuing on my way.

I felt the urge to write, to give embodiment to my enthusiasm, to express my emotions, and, opening that hand valise in which papers were more abundant than clothing and money, I went ahead sketching out the chapters that constitute this book.

At first they were mere articles, sent to certain daily newspapers in Spain, almost as poor and as persecuted as myself, which resulted in their giving me ridiculous honoraria. These articles attracted the attention of the public, and several publishers offered to bring them out in book form. The volume ran through many editions, and this was actually the work which first began to give me popularity among the readers of Spain.

The Italy which was then presented to my view was not that of to-day. The Italian nation has changed greatly since 1896, and it has just appeared before the world, in the recent war, in a rôle far more glorious than the one it had previously enacted. The Italy that

I describe in this book is that of the time of Crispi and of the Triple Alliance, when the government of Rome was subjected to German influence and was compelled to follow the mad and ambitious policies of her ally William II. On this account the reader may perhaps notice, along with my enthusiasm for the artistic Italy of the past and for the revolutionary Italy of Garibaldi and other heroes of her independence, a certain prejudice against the Italian rulers who were administering the country during the period of this my first visit.

Afterward, fortunately, Italy became transformed, in a liberal and human sense, and on many occasions I have made haste to acclaim and extol the splendid sacrifices she made during the recent war, struggling against the Austrians and Germans.

My excursion through Italy in 1896 was an intoxication of art; a surfeiting of masterpieces; an interminable banquet of memories, of colours, and of music. Well did I need all this, considering what awaited me upon my return to my country!

When I arrived again in Spain I was obliged to appear before a Council of War convened at Military Headquarters, and this military tribunal condemned me to several years' imprisonment because of the occurrence that had been the reason for my flight.

I remained shut up in the presidio for more than a year, surrounded by all manner of criminals, and suffering terrible privations. But, O power of youth and of artistic enthusiasm! many a time while suffering the martyrdom of long confinement in an unhygienic place, the horror of contact and of a common life with crim-

inals, the torture of insufficient food, and the lack of conveniences, I had but to close my eyes and allow my imagination to take wing for the land I had just visited, and then the recollection of its museums, its landscapes, its ruins, and its resurrected historic cities and relics seemed to create a magic atmosphere round about me, obliterating the present realities, and making me live for an hour in a supernatural world.

Since that first journey to Italy I have returned there five times. Circumstances have changed for me!

Now I travel through Italy in an automobile, I can stop at costly hotels, abounding in comforts, I know many people and they know me; I lack nothing; everything is within reach of my hand—and yet, O influence of age! never again shall I see the Italy I saw then, when I was wandering with only a few lire in the pocket of my only suit of clothes, with a valise that weighed next to nothing, in which there was little more than papers, with the smiling uncertainty whether I should be able to secure the necessary funds for continuing my journey to the next nearest city—and with the happy poverty of my twenty-eight years!

VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ.

1923.

IN THE LAND OF ART

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I

BOUND FOR ITALY

LATE in the afternoon the French steamer *Les Droits de L'Homme* began to make its way out to the open sea from the port of Cette.

Behind the mountain covered with gardens and villas, along whose slope extended the city, the pale winter sun was sinking, enveloping it in a cloud of golden haze. Along the great wharves, crossed here and there by Venetian bridges, rose the piercing discordant symphony of commercial activity, the shrieking of the camions, the heavy rumble of the big-bellied casks, the shouts of the longshoremen, the monotonous cry of "Oh, oh, isa!" from the sailors stirring about the decks of the ships anchored in a row before the buildings; and, looking through an entangled forest of ratlines and cables, sails and flags, to another pier beyond, the eye could make out a battalion returning from its training camp, marching along in the white uniform and little red cap of the mechanic, diminished by the distance into the semblance of pretty little soldiers from a toy bazaar.

At the entrance to the canals, fronting the open sea, swung a squadron of torpedo boats, long and ashen-

coloured, like eels sleeping on the surface of the water, and farther away, on the broad expanse of the gulf, outlined against the grey cloud-hung horizon, the groups of fishing smacks, the brigantines with all their white sails set, the steamers tufted by dense clouds of smoke, some bound for the shores of Spain, and others cleaving the waters in the direction of the coasts whence, centuries ago, civilisation came to the Gauls and the Iberians, who were then submerged in the most virile and interesting state of barbarity.

The steamer drew away, lightly rocked by the never-ceasing, voluptuous swaying of the sea, and round about her, mellowed by the distance, broken, tossed, and confused by the wind blowing across the gulf, vibrated the thousand echoes which were like the respiration of the ever-receding city: the beating of drums, the wail of cornets, the melancholy tolling of bells, and the final rush of the commercial scramble redoubling its efforts before the approach of night. On the infinite sheet of blue, this polished Venetian mirror reflecting in its depths the glowing twilight clouds, the dolphins leapt and played a game of tag, chasing one another like frolicsome boys, their grizzled bellies glittering in the dense waters, while the gulls lying on the undulating waves with folded wings gave themselves up to sleep.

Night closed round. In the deep furrow opened by the vessel, fringing its iron sides with bubbling foam, shone the reflections of the lanterns larboard and starboard like red and green fish; and the white light aloft at the head of the foremast nodded as if greeting the

stars twinkling in the sky high above the thick barrier of fog.

The Mediterranean is the sea of memories. One cannot think without profound emotion that these very waters which now sway us, are the same that opened for the first time before the concave wombs of the Phoenician ships bearing in their bosom civilisation and new life to the European Occident beneath their purple sails; the waters which, surrounding the slender Grecian trireme with white foam and with winged fish, stirred the poet navigator to dream his dream of the Sirens, of the Tritons, and of Venus, splendid in her beauty and seductive charm, giving rise to the most delightful of cults; the same waters which were the scene of the sanguinary clashes and the fierce struggles between the iron-prowed Carthaginian and Roman galleys; and centuries later, they witnessed the heroism of the Aragonese, sustaining the burden of our invincible galleys, and gently laving the metal shields of the almogávares hung upon the vessels' sides where they reflected the lofty stern that served as the indestructible throne of Roger de Lauria from which the great Aragonese admiral, proud and tenacious as are all those of our race, took oath that not a fish should swim in the waters of the Mediterranean that did not display on its back, as a symbol of submission, the four bars of blood.

I thought of the past glories of the "patria chica," that kingdom of Aragon, the home of savants and chieftains, an ambitious people, too great to be confined within their narrow boundaries, who reached out

toward the Orient, making themselves lords over the Mediterranean, over Italy, and over Greece. I reflected upon the fierce almogávares who, like the old guard of Bonaparte, strode victorious through distant lands, planting above Aetna the Aragonese standard that had spread terror among the Valencian Moors, and in Athens, sharpening on the fallen columns of the Parthenon their short, tireless, and unconquered swords that, like an emblem of ferocious aggression, announcing the blow in advance, were engraved with the impudent motto: "Fotli, fotli!"

Dwelling upon these glorious memories, I gazed at the distant coast dotted with red lighthouses, that bit of French soil which once belonged to us, and wherein, as the only trace of Spanish dominion, remain nothing but the herds of the savage bulls of La Camargue and that fondness for the bullfight which causes the people of the South to live in a state of perpetual sedition against the idealistic government of the Republic.

We became swallowed up in the fog. The vessel penetrated the dense barrier of vapours which resisted the light breeze blowing over the gulf, and she began to push on through chaos, groping in the dark, sounding the scream of the siren every instant to give warning of her presence and to avoid a collision. Even the lights on board gleamed like pale and distant stars; and one's lungs inhaled an atmosphere of sticky moisture, while the garments and beard dripped as if exposed to a heavy shower of rain.

Fog on the sea is the greatest of dangers, the one

which creates the deepest mental impression. A collision means sudden shipwreck, like a stroke of lightning, without hope, and one's spirit shrinks upon hearing the unseen lashing of the sea, from which dense vapours seem to rise, while every moment the imagination pictures the sinister outlines of a ship, approaching swiftly in the dull gray mist and about to crush the deck beneath one's feet as if it were a fragile shell.

At break of day we were off Toulon, making our way between the Hyères islands, also full of pleasant memories, where the great Valencian captain Don Hugo de Moncada destroyed the squadrons of Francis I.

I contemplated the narrow entrance to the greatest military port of France, before which, enveloped in smoke, like a dozen floating fortresses bristling with cannon, the training squadron of the neighboring Republic was performing evolutions. My gaze wandered from one to another of the hill crests crowned by a double girdle of forts which converted Toulon into an impregnable stronghold, and I recalled that those heights had witnessed the birth to a life of glory of an obscure artillery officer, a man who, according to the scientific world, was mad, and who, according to history, was great, a man called Napoleon Bonaparte.

On one of those hilltops was the battery called "The Men Without Fear," where the young commander, lean, spare, his thin hair falling on both sides of his bony countenance, beyond whose livid pallor protruded his effulgent eyes, wrote his plans of attack or strolled

about, lost in thought, with the cool courage and Olympic serenity of the predestined, without even wiping away the dust with which he was bespattered by the innumerable bombs that fell in that advanced post.

As if to make the impression still more vivid and enduring, hours afterward, sailing upon the blue sea, which was as luminous and musical as an Italian romance, we entered the Gulf of Juan, passing in sight of Cannes, the shore where the man who had been exiled to the island of Elba landed with a handful of companions in misfortune after the first collapse of his empire.

That tranquil gulf, in which to-day peaceful fishing smacks hoist their sails, once witnessed the most astounding resurrection of all history. This dangerous man, confined on the barren little island of Elba by the diplomatic Congress of Vienna, unexpectedly made his reappearance with a stroke of unexampled audacity while the great Powers were still in continued session. It represented tyranny returning to France, but a tyranny great, gilded, and embellished by the splendour of glory; the legitimate daughter, but the daughter nevertheless, of the military heroism of 1793, and a thousand times more welcome than the avaricious and hypocritical despotism of the Bourbons.

The great man returned alone; he presented himself upon the smiling strand with no other weapons than the gray redingote that had so often been shaken by the hurricane of battle, and his small tricorn hat, round about which the grapeshot of all Europe had whistled. The old battalions of the Grand Armée,

commanded now by royalist colonels, barred his way, but Bonaparte advanced, offering his breast to the rifles, challenging his former soldiers to shoot him who had so often led them to victory; and the rifles lowered, tears rolled down the grizzled cheeks, the tricolour flag was hoisted, the Bourbons fled, the Bonapartist Eagle flew victorious once again from belfry to belfry, enthusiasm shattered discipline, and from Cannes to Paris, across all France, flowed an interminable stream of soldiers of every rank who grouped themselves around a nervous, high-strung little horse, its body swollen by the obesity of age, while they roared in their excitement: "Live the Emperor!"

In Cannes there is more greatness than in Austerlitz and Jena. Alexander, Hannibal, and Cæsar won great battles, with skill as great or greater than Napoleon, but none of these was as unfortunate as Bonaparte, who, like the mythologic hero, possessed the force and audacity to rise up again with fresh vigour as soon as he had touched the earth. For this reason the extraordinary man who enchained the world with the depotism of glory inspires admiration and profound sympathy in even the most Republican hearts for the greatness and the valour with which he bore his misfortunes.

After passing Cannes all that is significant of modern life sweeps before the view—the cities where the consumptives and the vice-worn hordes of all Europe come to spend their millions. Nice, fringed with gardens; Monaco, the metropolis of gambling, smiling and seductive, reclining coquettishly upon a rose-coloured

hill, like an enticing cocotte concealing beneath her laces the voracious cat-claws that rip open the pockets of the incautious; the Alps, crowned with mist, their slopes covered by the many-hued mosaic of French chalets and Italian villas; San Remo, with her poetic shores, where the dead emperor of Germany, Frederick William, spat out the saliva of his mortal illness; and then, after night closed in, garlands of lights, yachts belonging to potentates sailing toward Monte Carlo, a continuous murmur of life coming from the Italian shore, as if its entire length were one interminable town. At daybreak the sound of cannons, and before us lay a gigantic port and a sprawling town stretching its vast assemblage of seven-storey buildings across three or four hills. On the summit wave the green fronds of gardens, mysteriously concealing among their branches the white marble of the villas with their voluptuous architecture.

That is Genoa; we are in Italy!

II

THE PORT OF GENOA

NO Italian city has experienced the effects of the unification of Italy to such an extent as Genoa. While of its ancient rivals, Venice and Pisa, the one drags out a painful existence depending upon the niggardly commerce of the Adriatic, and the other, as a result of geological changes, finds herself ever farther and farther from the sea, no longer enjoying the advantage of having a free port at Leghorn, Genoa is reviving, recovering her old-time power, and is coming to be the principal port of Italy.

The metropolis of Liguria no longer possesses those naval fleets which she used to rent to the sovereigns of Europe and which made her feared, turning the balance of success in the Continental conflicts with her weight; her marines no longer return laden with riches from those expeditions that were more worthy of pirates than of soldiers, on which, under shelter of the cross, they sacked and exterminated the towns of the Orient; her life to-day is one of honourable commercial navigation; the flags of every nation float in her extensive port, and it serves as a harbour, not only for the great steamers bound for the New World, but for the sailing-ships and smaller craft that ply along the Mediterranean coasts to Greece or to the Black Sea.

In an extensive and densely populated port like that of Genoa the greatness of our present civilisation can best be admired, which in the imagination of many, obsessed by a love for the past, seems prosaic, although it actually is poetic and sublime on account of its tremendous proportions.

Approaching from the solitary and monotonous sea, where fishing launches are met almost equalling in size the ships of the earlier navigators, one experiences a profound impression on entering a great port at the height of its activity in the uncertain light of a foggy dawn.

Moored to the wharves are enormous floating structures with their national flags waving from their mastheads, transatlantic liners that are veritable cities, and that offer everything to the thousands of beings who inhabit them for a month, from the band of music that whiles away the tedium of the high sea, to the doctor and the priest who attend them in their last hours; English steamers, dirty and gloomy, flinging ashore the coal that constitutes innumerable mountains and blackens the atmosphere; American boats from which gigantic bales of cotton roll out upon the wharf; Norwegian brigs that vomit northern lumber from their sides, with a resounding clatter of boards; Italian crusiers, white and dazzling from masthead to keel, displaying on their prows that five-pointed star, which here is the official emblem, and which makes Christian nations dream of terrifying Masonic conspiracies; in the center of the port, in the almost infinite lake of greenish tranquil water, above which

the mists of dawn seem to be dragging, the tugboats, crossing and recrossing like a swarm of buzzing flies, their engines puffing as they tow the frigates that enter with furled sails, slow and hesitant like blind men allowing themselves to be guided by tiny dogs; and in the background the Italian city of unequivocal character, dirty and merry like a smiling boy who never washes his face, displaying beautiful seven-storey houses with attractive green Persian blinds, but with their windows dressed with recently washed rags, making a shameless exhibition, and dripping upon the passer-by the misery of a people who regard parasites as an indubitable sign of health.

Genoa is the city of contrasts, of great palaces and miserable alleys. In the upper part, on the heights, luxuriant gardens, marble villas, genuine nests of love, that bring to mind the voluptuous little French hotels of the time of the Regency; down below, near the port, wards that are typical ghettos, with narrow, almost subterranean lanes, where the projecting eaves meet overhead, and where three persons cannot go abreast down the precipitous descent of the cobble-paved walk.

With the exception of a half dozen great thoroughfares, which, in a serrated line, form the spinal column of the city, the other streets are called *vici* or alleys, and there are some which are mere stairways along which one cannot walk without grasping a greasy iron handrail.

The tiniest square suffices for setting up a laundry in the open, where the old Genoese crones, ugly, dry,

red, and angular, wrangle by way of entertaining themselves while swirling through the water the tatters which a few moments later, as dirty as before the immersion, are hung on the lines that cross from house to house, decorating the *vici* with a thousand colours, as if in preparation for an open-air festival.

This fondness for doing everything in the middle of the street is the only thing in Genoa that denotes Italy. The population, aside from their little Calabrian hats and their immense Humbert-style moustaches, possesses more of the English character than of the Italian. *Far niente* accompanied with poverty has few admirers; the people, being born in a seaport, with the way to all the world lying open before them, think of nothing but making money, and all this youth, red rather than brown, more Saxon in appearance than Latin, goes away to the Argentine or to the United States, carried off by the great emigrant transports that fling the Italian flesh upon the shores of America to be consumed in the most grinding labour.

It is clearly evident that this is a power of the first order involved in the concubinage known as the Triple Alliance. This country whose prosperity is questionable, and where not long ago the socialist Ferri proclaimed in the halls of the legislative chamber that the greater part of the Italian villages are straw hovels worse than those Abyssinian settlements that Baratieri tried to conquer, sustains nevertheless a numerous army, almost as large as that of France who can permit herself such luxuries, for she attracts and monopolises all the money of the world.

As I stood on the wharves that fringe the port, after having spent a few hours tramping through the streets of Genoa, cannon shots began to boom. They came from the German ships, the Imperial yacht *Hohenzollern* and the cruiser *Kaiserin Augusta,* that had just come to anchor, awaiting the arrival of Emperor Wilhelm to take him to Naples.

Those enormous structures of steel with triple chimneys resembling towers, and masts that sustain veritable fortresses, salute the town with twenty or more guns, and from their gloomy sides leap forth rigid horizontal blasts of murky smoke, like arrows of fire, while the echo of the detonations is repeated along the immense gulf and from the mountainous coast of Liguria.

The Italy of Humbert and of Crispi seems well pleased with the visit of this powerful sovereign, this perfect reproduction of Charles XII of Sweden, who, now that he cannot make war, flings himself into the arts with the ease and the bungling manner of the unbalanced, and, after painting pictures and composing music, now devotes himself to the writing of a drama, as readily as he may take a notion to-morrow to make a pair of shoes.

The visit is deserving of gratitude. Either there is friendship or there is not. The cronies of the Triple Alliance should help one another out in difficult moments, and now that, due to the disasters in Abyssinia, the manifestations of the Italian people, during which they shouted "Down with the Monarchy!" are still ringing in their ears, the Teuton despot appears to

make patent again to the Italian monarchy its friendship and support.

It brings to mind a mason coming to examine a building that is crumbling and falling to ruin.

III

THE CITY OF MARBLE

GENOA is the city of marble.

In no other part of Italy nor of the world has this stone, so precious and costly in other countries, and treated here with the scorn that comes from abundance, even to the point of serving frequently to pave the streets, been so used and so abused.

The main streets of the Ligurian city are a tortuous row of palaces, with their façades covered with immense figures and luxurious stucco-work. The great eaves, sustained by caryatides, almost meet, the brilliant midday light filtering through the narrow space. Late at night, when the municipal lights begin to grow dim, these narrow streets, with their marble walls that seem to mount to the twinkling stars, give the impression of the winding galleries of a quarry, where the pick has hacked out at random profiles and reliefs that in the daylight are prodigies of art.

The ancient glories of the Genoese nation, the power given her by her sailors and merchants, is revealed in these great palaces which once sheltered the Ligurian patricians, families that, with intrigues and conspiracies, disputed with one another for the office of doge or captain of the Republic.

Forty-six palaces, all of them splendid in their

marble interiors, from the foundation to the final balustrade, may be counted on the four streets that form the backbone of the city.

They are the ancient dwellings of the Dorias, the Spinolas, the Pallavicinos, the Balvis, the Serras, and other families which originated in our country or else sent thither glorious representatives that figure proudly in our national history.

To-day these patrician dwellings are deserted, the descendants of those powerful Republicans are courtiers of the house of Savoy; they live in Rome, near the king, as officers or high functionaries, and they relegate to some old family retainer the task of showing to strangers the vast rooms, with their gildings obscured by time, the majestic and solid furniture, in which moths have begun to do their work; the Persian carpets, upon which one still seems to hear the metallic clank of spurs and the froufrou of long velvet trains; the splendid tapestries stolen during maritime expeditions, and the numerous paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, Carracci, Guido Reni, Pinturicchio, Procaccini, Rubens, Van Dyck, and thousands of others, acquired during that happy period when the aristocracy considered the protection of the arts the most distinguished of fashions, as bullfighters are now protected in Spain, and jockeys in the rest of the world.

The most interesting of all these palaces is that of the Dorias, the famous family of navigators, lords of the sea, mercenaries of the waves, who hired to the sovereigns of Europe their squadrons consisting of

hundreds of galleys, and which our Charles V had the cleverness to attract to himself, thus giving a death-blow to Francis I.

This gigantic mansion, with its long, Latin inscription on the old façade, stands on the shore of the sea, upon an elevation dominating a great expanse of the Mediterranean, as if those who built it needed to see at all hours, from their bed as well as from the table, the vast blue plain, the source of their power. The winds that blow in from the gulf and sweep roaring through the marble colonnades, now cover the flags of the courtyards and the paths of the abandoned garden with a green moss that compels one to walk with caution.

Oh, the prose of our epoch! The mansion of these patricians, whom the most powerful kings of Europe called cousins, and who had Charles V and Don Juan of Austria as guests in their salons, is rented to-day like any tenement house. The lower storeys where once were quartered the marines who fought in Lepanto, and that guarded the Milanese armour in which the Dorias displayed themselves upon the bridges of their ships like statues of steel, serve to-day as a phalanstery for a few Englishmen and Yankees, who use them for offices and warehouses to store liquors, machinery, and cotton.

The prosaic painted signs that indicate the name of the firm stand out insolently in the courtyard of the palace, defiling the delicately wrought marble doors. Casks and bales of goods with English lettering roll over the flagstones that three centuries ago yielded

beneath the footsteps of chained Turkish pirates, that echoed the rude clash of lances, the blows of sabres, and loud trumpet-blasts, accompanied by the shouts of the masses, acclaiming the triumph of the Dorias.

But as each epoch brings with it new heights to be attained as well as unlooked-for decadence, the Dorias of to-day, who have no ships on the sea to bring them valuable prisoners, and who lead the costly existence of high society in Rome, joyfully accept the pounds sterling or the dollars of the Saxon peoples, and think, no doubt, that the home of their forefathers was never worth as much as at present.

Fortunately the utilitarian invasion has not reached the upper storeys and there the decoration is still preserved and the memory of the great family is still in the atmosphere.

On a long gallery, from the marble balustrade of which the green-tinged statues of the garden can be seen, as well as the great port with its jungle of masts and cordage, one can admire, painted al fresco by Bonacorsi, one of the best pupils of Raphael, all the most famous Dorias, seated in the clouds like an Olympic Senate of gigantic proportions, dressed in Roman style with corselets of scales and showing their powerful limbs in majestic nudity.

Farther on, passing doors of precious woods, whose complicated design denotes the Moorish artist, one enters the rooms of the family, with their gigantic chimneys on the marble surfaces of which half a celestial court is sculptured; their monumental beds, covered with solid velvet; their Moorish carpets; their

chairs, which still seem to hold the impress of their ancient owners, and in the corners, as glorious trophies, the enormous crystal lanterns, pointed like Gothic chapels, wrested from the poops of galleys taken from the enemy.

The maritime power which the Dorias gave to Genoa was amazing. This Italian city, although now nothing but a great port, was in their day as powerful as England. Here was invented the bill of exchange; here was hoarded the gold of the world; the greatest bankers of Christendom resided within its walls, being the equals in privilege and importance of any naval officer of the Most Serene Republic. The greatest kings dared not make war without first counting upon the goodwill of the Genoese merchant, the only one in Europe who could lend millions; and his marine was so important that it consisted of more than a thousand warships with a hundred thousand fighting men.

In one of the rooms, opposite the old chair in which Charles V sat when he was a guest in the palace, there may be seen, reproduced on a great painting, the immense Genoese armada in battle array, forming divisions, their triangular sails spread, their streamers at the topmast, their gunwales bristling with cannons and bombards, and, in the presence of this immense display, one can easily understand the reason why the Genoa of the 16th century weighed in the destinies of Europe as much or more than does England in the present.

The memory of the great emperor still persists in the palace of the Dorias. The Spaniard who strolls through these ancient halls, obsessed by historic memo-

ries, feels that with the lifting of a curtain he may behold the handsome forehead, the audacious nose, and the sophisticated smile of that extraordinary man, and may at the same time hear the silken tread of the enormous greyhound, the constant companion of the renowned monarch.

All the illustrious men of that period, made sceptical by the fickleness of fortune, lacking faith in the fidelity of man, centered their confidence in the affection of an animal. Charles V had his greyhound, and Andrea Doria had his cat, a beautiful cinnamon-coloured cat, fat and glossy, with enormous moustaches, and a grave and thoughtful head worthy of a philosopher. A masterful brush has taken care to immortalise it, and there it is in the finest room of the palace, on a great canvas that occupies an enviable position, seated on his hind feet, and listening with profound attention to his master Andrea Doria who, with his white beard over his breast, wrapped in a flowing black gown, and the velvet cap with a fluted border pulled down over his ears, reveals the emaciation, the appearance of suffering, of the man of the sea who reaches old age after having spent his life lashed by the waves and battered by the wind.

Perhaps the renowned sailor is telling his faithful friend his opinion of Francis I and Puss approves with his feline smile.

That period, in which Andrea Doria, secure in the adherence of his fellow citizens, gave his attention only to winning mastery over the Mediterranean, must have been a happy one for Genoa.

The Genoese masses of that day could not have been very well off so far as their liberty was concerned, and this is proved by the conspiracy of Fieschi in the times of Giannettino Doria, the son of Andrea. Historic greatness costs the people very dear, just as the glory of Charles V was acquired at the expense of Castilian liberty, and that of Napoleon, of Revolutionary France.

However, at least these periods of glorious dictatorship leave great works of art as memorials; and the existing testimonials of the period of the Dorias are the great Genoese palaces with their lavish display of sculpture, those gigantic figures that, sunken to the belly in a foliage of stone, sustain with their contracted limbs the balustrades of balconies and windows.

Surely, the statues on the façades of these ancient palaces are so numerous that, were they all suddenly to become animated with life and start to run, the innkeepers of Genoa, though as innumerable as the progeny of Abraham, would not have sufficient covers for so many guests of stone.

IV

THE HOUSE OF SAVOY

IT must be admitted that if the house of Savoy is as bad politically as all the other families which sustain the monarchic régime in Europe, when looked upon from the side of its private life it arouses greater admiration than that of all the other dynasties together.

Italian unity, which has made the Savoys sovereigns over twenty-eight million people, has not obliterated their modest customs as former kings of Piedmont, monarchs of a small poor country, compelled to adjust their tastes according to the restricted civil list.

Moreover, democracy, like the sun, gilds whatever it touches, and the present dynasty, daughter of the revolution, despite the fact that it has begun to deny it, cannot easily relinquish the simple taste and the Spartan severity acquired during the period in which its members fought on the fields of battle against this same Austria upon which it now looks as a faithful ally.

The Savoys are a dynasty that has come up from below, and, relying upon the people, has endeavoured to identify itself with them, imitating their simplicity of custom. If it is true that the republic is not to be established in Italy, the kings that will succeed Humbert—influenced by a continuous association with Germany and Austria—will live pompously and ridicu-

lously as does the German Kaiser or any other of those monarchs who believe in divine right; but up to the present, the individuals of the house of Savoy are more attractive because of the simplicity of their habits, which softens and conceals that amorous fever, the inextinguishable trait of the family.

It is in this tendency of the race that the downward trend is shown. Victor Emmanuel, that Nimrod of the Italian campagna, who avoided the palaces and found himself at ease only in the cabins of the forest wardens, with his plumed hat drawn down over his eyebrows, gun in hand, reserved for the rustic beauties, brown of skin and bare of leg, the smiles that the lavishly arrayed ladies of the court sought in vain. In this he was like our Charles V, who was thrilled by the beauty of the German washerwoman, and brought into the world the fruits of a cross between the imperial sceptre and the clothes-stick.

As for our Amadeo, we all know that he felt in no less degree the fervour of the blood of his father. Concerning Humbert nothing need be said, because that kind of personal judgment belongs to history, and it acquires its rights only after the death of the individual; but his simplicity of habit is evident to those who meet him every day on the streets of Milan or Rome, wearing a tall hat and an afternoon coat, like any honourable bourgeois, and crippling his arms by so frequently replying to the bows of the persons he meets.

He has had a military education, having scarcely attained manhood when his father was struggling

against the Austrians, spending his youth in the camps and in battle, and remote, fortunately, from the effeminate influences of the palace. He is a soldier, and he has the martial appearance, the frank manner, and the simplicity of bearing of a good comrade in the barracks.

I was thinking of all this one morning as I was strolling through the salons of the royal palace at Genoa, a great marble mansion magnificently situated in view of the gulf, with steps descending to the sea, which permit of embarking without going out to the street. Reviewing the antecedents of the Savoys, I could explain to myself the modesty, the lack of royal ostentation, which are observed in this dwelling, as in all the others that the family of Humbert possesses in the principal capitals of Italy.

In the salons are many paintings of great value; but paintings are so abundant here that they are to be found anywhere. The rest of the decorations, false, pretentious, and poor, are like the house of an upstart installed in haste.

Gilded chairs of equivocal taste, which seem as if they might have been taken from the storeroom of any theatre; mirrors with machine-made frames that bring to mind great barber shops; niggardly beds, topped by enormous crowns of ridiculous appearance; narrow bathtubs like those in hydrotherapeutic establishments.

Let the partisans of monarchy blush with shame. Let the constituents of royalty who demand luxury and display tremble with fury. Any labouring man in Republican France, any millionaire pork-packer in the

United States, lives in greater comfort and better taste than the sovereigns of Italy.

Perhaps in this monarchical simplicity design plays its part, and may be a sign of the astuteness and common sense of the Savoys.

A people that in '48, from Naples to Turin, shouted "Live the Republic!" and that still sees the red cape of Garibaldi, the patriot of the revolution "without fear and without reproach," floating in space, must be treated with exquisite tact in order that it may tolerate the monarchy, with all the uncertainties to which the haughty policy of Crispi has dragged it.

It must be admitted that Humbert knows how to do this to perfection; he exhibits himself with no ostentation whatever; not a misfortune occurs throughout the entire Peninsula that he does not go in person, accompanied by his wife, to remedy; he gives away, in subscriptions and beneficent donations, hundreds of thousands of lire, and these people, who, like all good Latins, are impressionable, and who as readily reveal themselves sublimely heroic during the epoch of Garibaldi as ridiculous in the present period, speak with enthusiasm of the *"regina che è molto bella"* and of the *"re che è molto caritativo,"* as if those sums of money that the king bestows were drawn from his own private purse and were not a small part of what is wrested from hungry Sicily, from Roman poverty, and from almost savage Sardinia, for the maintenance of an army and a dynasty whose honour is undoubted, but without which Italy could exist perfectly well.

If the heroes and martyrs of Italian independence

could have foreseen the present, perhaps they would not have fought with that ardour that placed them on an equality with the paladins of antiquity.

Monarchical Italy erects grandiose monuments to Garibaldi in every city, and pursues and incarcerates his old soldiers as enemies of the established institutions. These bronzes that reproduce the knightly figure of the hero of Marsala produce the effect of an irony.

Poor Garibaldi! Tireless soldier of liberty for both hemispheres, who raised the flag of independence in Rome above the ashes of a hundred generations of republicans; who swept Piedmont clean of Austrians; who ventured to conquer the kingdom of the two Sicilies with a thousand volunteers, the most marvellous piece of audacity ever chronicled; who with a handful of men armed with old guns rushed forth to combat imperial France which supported the Pope; all this he did for the triumph of the Republic, an ideal that animated his life; and the result of so much abnegation, of such sublime sacrifice, was to enlarge and consolidate an ungrateful monarchy that held him prisoner with conspicuous honours, but prisoner nevertheless, in his retreat at Caprera.

The unfortunate hero was the victim of the most extraordinary moral deception known to history.

The unconscious founder of the power of the Savoys, he spent his whole life fighting against the "tedescos" as the enemies of his native land. Yet Austrians and Germans are to-day the most feasted and appreciated by the Italian monarchy.

V

APOTHEOSIS OF MARBLE

IN cities that, like Genoa, have been independent states of diminutive territory, but of glorious history, the municipal house is a centre worthy of being visited for the recollections it holds.

The Genoese town hall, situated on the Via Garibaldi, occupies the ancient Tursi palace, a superb marble structure with a staircase of magnificent proportions, which gives the impression of having been built for giants.

The glories of the past, immortalized by illustrious brushes, come out to meet the visitor who enters the door, and climbing the stairs of that which is a notable museum rather than the Cabildo of a city, he beholds the spectacle of the arrival of Don Juan of Austria in Genoa, after the victory at Lepanto, admiring the slender and austere figure of the bastard of Charles V, who with the noble simplicity of the hero, stands forth in his black clothing against the multicoloured background formed by the acclaiming people, the sailors that are opening passage, the patrician dignitaries solemnly trailing their long togas, and the Doge Pallavicino, covered by the purple of the most high magistrate and the symbolic mitre of the lords of the sea.

In this palace are to be found the authentic souvenirs

of the most illustrious of the Genoese, of that visionary pilot, who, a beggar like Homer, dreaming of reality and of a chimera, combining the certainty of the roundness of the earth with the desire of reconquering the Holy Sepulchre, travelled from court to court offering a world, until he came to the almost Moorish Andalusia, where he found the queen who listened to him, and the Pinzons, Spanish navigators, confident and audacious, who did not hesitate to follow the visionary.

In the office of the Council of Genoa, a regal room covered with tapestries, frescoes, and superb bronzes, fragments of the Code of Columbus are displayed, safeguarded in an artistic glass case, the clear and firm Gothic lettering of the famous Admiral causing admiration.

In the same room lies the souvenir of another Genoese, if not as useful to humanity as the Navigator, no less great in the history of art. On a cushioned background of blue silk, and guarded under glass as if it were a miraculous image to be worshipped only from afar, is Paganini's violin, which, although of great value as a relic, possesses no significance to-day without the superhuman hand that drew from it prodigious strains.

Seeing the mute instrument lying upon the soft silk like a glorious corpse, one recalls the history of that artist whom superstitious society at the beginning of the century considered a person in perpetual pact with the devil, his precarious existence, from the time when as a youngster he ran about the wharves of the port of Genoa, until he fascinated the highest courts with

his fantastic music, with his novelesque adventures, and his pilgrimage after death, when the cities refused to receive the remains of the diabolic musician, compelling filial piety to give them burial in an unknown corner on the coast of Nice. That genius who, during his lifetime, had been the pampered son of fortune, who had been loved by the most beautiful women of the world, leading the mad existence of a nabob, and flinging out of the window the riches taken in at his concerts, lies to-day in an unknown grave and, less fortunate than his violin, cannot receive the visit of adoration.

Paganini's fate is more lamentable since he was a son of Genoa, a city that rivals ancient Egypt in its obsession concerning death and in perpetuating the passage through life in artistic form.

You arrive at Genoa, and immediately they will offer to show you the most notable thing in the city, that is, the cemetery. There is not a single person here possessed of a modest fortune who does not devote himself while still living to the planning of his tomb.

Pride, petulance, the desire to shine even though in the form of a skeleton, impels the good bourgeois of Genoa to invade the empire of death, which is one of equality and forgetfulness, with noisy acclamation.

Many quarries have been exhausted for the sake of decorating the vast field of death where sleep the eternal sleep the shopkeepers of Genoa, the merchants, the shipbuilders, all those who spent their lives battling for the centimo, depriving themselves perhaps of the

necessaries and sinfully exploiting their fellow man, in order to leave in their wills some hundreds of thousands of lire destined for posthumous glorification in the form of carved marble and gilded epitaphs that, being so glaring and extravagant, produce a laugh instead of moving to sympathy.

An entire town of beings, dumb, rigid, immaculately white, and as numerous as the population of Genoa, lie among the flowers and foliage of the cemetery, or along the deserted colonnades whose pavement repeats the footsteps of the visitor with a fearsome echo. How many are they? Who knows! A hundred thousand, two hundred thousand, a whole world gathered together by the whim of four generations. All the sculptors of Italy have eaten from this Genoese cemetery, where the dead consider themselves dishonoured if they have not someone on earth who fills his mouth through carving some marble figure. Weeping widows bending beneath long veils of delicate weave; Saturns with gloomy frowns; angels sustaining themselves on the toe of a foot, like graceful dancing girls; enormous crosses like masts of a ship; groups reproducing the entire family; Grecian urns; Egyptian pyramids; Roman sarcophagi; Gothic windows; saints of various categories; closed doors, on whose steps one perceives the genius of silence, finger on lip, all of marble, white, green, or black, of colossal proportions, as if ordered by people who give no thought to money and who estimate art according to its size.

As a museum of statues made to order, it is not bad; but the idea of death, a future certainty, which inspires

at once both fear and consolation, that mysterious sphinx whom we see at the termination of our career, and who sometimes impels us to enjoy ourselves like mad people, or again to conform in our acts with the good and the virtuous, is not to be found in this necropolis, search as one may.

When it comes to cemeteries, I prefer those of the villages, where death does not make one laugh with such pedantry of marble, and where the miserable corpse, like a debtor faithful and honourable in payment, mingles with the earth, and returns to it what it took from it, not caring a hang whether or not those who pass above are ignorant of the name of the mass of decay underneath.

For this reason this cemetery of Genoa, aside from its artistic merit, produces only an impression of jocose scorn, notwithstanding its assumption of grandeur. A smile arises to the lips upon finding one's self face to face with the pride of this bourgoisie of Genoa, poor devils who, because they made money in America, consider themselves important personages, and do the kind turn of reproducing in colossal monuments the semblances of street porters, so that coming generations may not be compelled to rack their brains trying to find out how those extraordinary geniuses looked.

And what epitaphs! Lucky cemetery of Genoa, where not a single rascal is interred! According to the epitaphs all those interred in it are worthy; most honourable merchants; gentlemen of I know not how many orders; fathers of the poor, which is the eternal title of all those who lend at seventy per cent; and,

as a supreme tribute, as an evidence of superhuman talent, they affirm that the dead man knew how to make a great deal of money.

On some of the tombs the widow is reproduced by the adulating chisel as a weeping beauty, wrapped in her veil, almost swooning on the tomb, taking oath with her clenched hands that she will be faithful to the poor deceased until her own hour shall come; and at the end of the year, the astonished statue sees the animated model coming to change the flowers, fresh and smiling, hanging upon the arm of some young gallant, who is the second husband, or something worse.

Life, with its conventional affectations and its easily-forgotten promises, is too great a farce for proud humanity to undertake to petrify, prolonging it beyond the tomb.

In all this city of display and of ostentation of self-love, there is but one simple and stirring sarcophagus: an arrogant youthful head, bearded and with bobbed hair, rising above a full, plaited blouse, and on the base, after the name, appears this concise inscription: "One of the Thousand."

You have said enough, brave fighter for the liberty of your country! To be one of the Thousand, one of that mad expedition crowned by success, which, disembarking on the shores of Marsala, following the luminous sword of Garibaldi, overthrew the throne of the Sicilian Bourbons, is worth something more to future generations than to have been a millionaire and a "father of the poor," like those infinite simpletons

who from the height of the neighbouring monuments look upon you with condescension. In the presence of your Garibaldian blouse the head of the visitor uncovers, and those who but a moment ago were smiling at the absurd figures in marble, posed in theatrical attitudes, on whose vulgar foreheads may still seem to be read the latest quotations on exchange, and the determination to wrest the last peseta from his neighbour, salute you respectfully.

Death cannot be deceived. All the display of sculpture in the cemetery of Genoa, all the scenic luxury of pompous Latin and Italian inscriptions, dwindle and disappear before a small tomb tucked away in a corner, hollowed out of the rock of the mountain. Two words, a simple name, are displayed on the front, yet, nevertheless, on reading it the cold chill of emotion runs along the spine, the eyes become dimmed, and one feels impelled to bend the knee.

There rests half a century of incessant conspiracy, of enthusiastic battling for Italian liberty and for the Republic, in the press and on the platform, as well as on the field of battle! There lies one who, with the echo of his powerful voice, awoke young Italy and compelled the Carbonari to load their guns in secret! There lies one who, the emancipation of his own country seeming to him too little, worked for that of all countries, and collaborated from London with Ledru-Rollin and Victor Hugo to disturb the slumbers of Napoleon III, with Orense y Garrido to dethrone Isabel II; he whose head had become white and his body aged at thirty, racked by the cruelty of Austrian

prisons; he who with a word blindly hurled thousands of young compatriots to their death; he who refused to return to his native land after the realisation of the unity, in order not to truckle to monarchy; there rests simply Giuseppe Mazzini!

Those are the epitaphs that mean something!

VI

LOMBARDY

WE arrived at Milan on a Saturday at sunset.

For six hours the train, rapid and dirty, as are all those in Italy, crossed the hilly land of Liguria, the perforated chain of mountains surrounding Genoa, and beautiful and fertile Lombardy, that immense evergreen plain, which, because of its richness, has attracted invasions by the people of the North, and for whose possession barbarian hordes, the cavalry of the kings of France, the glorious Spanish regiments of infantrymen, and the battalions of Napoleon, have struggled, shedding rivers of blood.

The valley, which extends beyond the view, like a green, undulating sea, without the slightest alteration, without the least roll in the land, affords a beautiful sight; crossed by gentle rivers and broad canals; dotted here and there by luxuriant forests, with green fields fringed with shrubbery; its excellent roads, along which the ox-carts roll with indolent squeak; its brown and smiling *contadini* with rolled-up petticoats, bare legs, and heads bristling with knife-like needles forming a fan of steel at the back; its bright little towns brimming with "character"; its attractive white houses with green Persian blinds crowding against the old church

and the ruined feudal castle; and in the clear atmosphere, laden with light and colour and buzzing insects, an eternal fragrance of ripe alfalfa, which seems to be the distinctive perfume of the Italian campagna.

To the north, cut by bands of cloud, its eternal snows gleaming on the summit like blocks of silver, the horizon is outlined by the jagged summits of the Alps, the natural barrier of free Switzerland, from whose heights descend the foaming torrents, which later, turned into gentle rivers, fertilise and refresh the Lombard soil. At the extreme opposite side stand out the first ribs of the Apennines, the great vertebral column of the Italian Peninsula; and the plain of Lombardy, enjoying the beneficent privilege of lying between both ranges of gigantic sponges that suck up for her the exhaustless moisture of these great altitudes, feels the concealed torrents of melted snow circulating through her depths, so that her surface becomes spontaneously covered with eternal verdure, with the beautiful meadows that feed infinite herds of glossy oxen, tended by Piedmontese shepherds, almost naked, savage of aspect, and having their breasts laden with scapularies.

Perhaps no other plain in the world contains so many historic names as this of Lombardy. Here Carignano, with its sanguinary and stubborn battle of the giants, where Francis I overcame the traditional firmness of the Swiss; there Pavia, where in his turn the same king of France was forced to recognise that the real giants were the Spanish infantrymen; and after that comes the whole immense catalogue of glo-

ries of the wars of the French Republic, where, for the first time became known that general of twenty-six, called Bonaparte, whom the old grenadiers, with grey moustaches, affectionately nicknamed the Little Corporal; then Lodi, with its amazing tactical novelties; Arcole with its glorious bridge on which one ever seems to see the youthful Napoleon, with his small, erect form, holding the tricolour aloft, shouting "Forward!" and rushing dauntlessly through the grapeshot with the security of one predestined; next Rivoli with its famous change of front that immortalised Masséna; and Marengo, where the battle lost by the future emperor at three in the afternoon was won at five by the youthful Desaix, who paid for the victory with his life.

A beautiful country is this, where every field has echoed to the gallop of the horse of some great man, and even the smallest villages bear names immortal in history.

In few places in the world is the fertility of the soil so evident. It is comprehensible why so rich a country should have excited the avarice of all the conquerors of Europe. One inevitably recalls the famous proclamation that Bonaparte, on the crest of the neighbouring Alps, addressed to his hungry and ragged army: "You lack bread, clothing, and shoes. Take them all with your bayonets. They lie there at your feet."

And this is the justification of the desperate courage of those soldiers of the Republic who, although only twenty thousand, defeated eighty thousand Austrians

at Rivoli. They fought in order not to return to the Alps, the mountains of hunger; in order to remain in this seductive Lombardy, which has always yielded everything to the conqueror, from bed and food to the fresh cheeks of her beautiful peasant girls.

To-day, thanks to Italian unity, no one aspires to the possession of Lombardy, and this region is the richest and most prosperous on the Peninsula.

The Lombards are the Catalans of Italy, and Milan the moral capital of the Peninsula.

Rome leads a soft and false existence as the seat of government; but Milan imposes herself upon the entire nation as the prime center of industry and of intellectual labor.

The Lombard capital, which in population and size is superior to our Madrid, rises almost in the center of the extensive Campagna, surrounded by a veritable forest of smoking chimneys. Here is conducted nearly all the manufacturing of Italy.

But even more than in industry Milan exercises a universal power in the world of art.

The houses of Riccordi and Sonzogno, dominant lords of music who compete by throwing millions at each other's heads and by developing rival composers, monopolise all the theatres where the opera is heard, in America and Australia, as well as in Europe. The republican newspaper, *Il Secolo*, publishes half a million copies daily and has the standing of the *Times* or the *New York Herald*. There are five or six newspapers that publish eighty thousand to a hundred thousand copies; the publishing house of Treves Brothers

sells the most famous works of contemporary literature of all the nations at a peseta a volume, in enormous editions; and during the time when the whole of France was mocking at the great Emile Zola and was calling him *"cochon,"* Milan was publishing various editions of his novels, and was passionately arguing in the press, not the worth of the works themselves, which was undoubted from the first moment in the concept of this artistic public, but the merit of the different translations.

Milan has money, dines well, hears much music, and reads without limit. What more can a people desire?

For this reason the Lombard metropolis seems to be pervaded by an atmosphere of seduction and charm, and attracts the strangers who, whether artists or mere curiosity seekers, form almost a third part of her population.

At sunset, after the train leaves behind historic Pavia, of grateful memory to every Spaniard, historic Milan, with her slender towers whose windows glow in the sun like sheets of flame, surges like a fantastic city through the golden sunset vapours; her robust palaces lifting into the blue their lacy, airy Renaissance pinnacles; her intricate succession of waves formed of red tiled roofs, and above them the famous Cathedral, that marvel of Gothic art, white, dazzling, bristling with slender needles, like a block of ice fallen from the lofty Alps into the center of the capital, crowned by luminous clouds; and, concealed by the embroidered stone, the swaying bronze bells hanging in its pointed campaniles obsess the newcomer with

their solemn echoes, and seem to whisper into his ear:

"I do not know you; but, whether you are incredulous or devout, your first visit shall be to me."

And the Cathedral is never mistaken.

VII

THE CATHEDRAL FROM WITHOUT

EARLY one Sunday morning I studied at close range, in all its splendid beauty, the Cathedral of Milan.

On the broad steps the bourgeois families, decked out in their Sunday best, on their way to hear mass, crossed through groups of English tourists, who, guide-book in hand, and treading heavily in their yellow shoes, rush over the whole world in search of novelties, pass like lightning flashes through divers countries, seeing all and understanding little, and, with the same "Oooh!" of satisfaction, admire either the Cathedral of Milan, or the bull-ring of Madrid.

If the Middle Ages, that period so slandered and so poorly understood, possessed no other claims to free it from the unredeemed barbarity which some pretend to see in it, the glory of the sublime monuments it sowed upon the soil of Europe would be sufficient. Those superb cathedrals, in which stone, embroidered, done into delicate filigree, sings a hymn to Christian art, seem to be the petrified sigh of a people who, though ignorant and pious, kept the eyes of the imagination ever fixed upon the other life, and whose souls rose and rose toward the unknown, as do the lacy

needles bristling from the roofs of the temples, and which, like arrows of marble, pierce the blue of space.

To hear in the great Piazza del Duomo the whistle of electric cars, the shouts of the newspaper venders heralding the last couplets about the journey of Crispi to hell, the innumerable sounds connected with the stir of modern life, and to have before one's eyes the Middle Ages well preserved and even rejuvenated, with its marvels of airy architecture and its sculptural flights, is a spectacle of fascinating novelty to be found only in Milan standing before its famous Cathedral.

Imagine a great mountain of marble, the interior of which several generations have been hollowing out, leaving on the summit an infinite number of needles, perforating its walls with ogives reaching from the ground to the roof and having for lattices gratings of stone, whereon the chisel has traced the most complicated arabesque; this is the Cathedral of Milan!

This mountain possesses its flora; a fantastic vegetation of roses in stone, of closely massed foliage that developed under the hand of the Christian sculptor, beneath which are sheltered dragons with open jaws, hideous members of a predatory tribe, their mouths set in repulsive grins, all the extravagant conceptions imagined by the mediæval artist when dreaming of the monstrosities of hell, the perpetual prepossession of the period.

It has its silent, eternal population: four thousand statues, the product of different centuries, that seem to guard the edifice; holy men and martyrs, warriors and artists, those who figure prominently in the calen-

dar of the saints, or in the history of Italy; some in the act of administering benediction, others grasping lances; some pointing toward the earth and examining a sword; the majority gazing toward heaven; and all of them gallantly lined up in the cornices, defying the years and the fury of the elements, rising erect from the sharp vertex of the needles, or descending audaciously along the buttresses of the wall, like a chain of men seeking shelter to prevent themselves from falling, beneath the pointed filigree-like spires, their feet resting on pedestals that are the heads of frightful monsters.

In order that the architectural marvel may more resemble a mountain, the marble is blackened below and on the sides, and glistens above on the tall needles like those colossi of the Alps, luminously crowned with eternal snows.

Who was the author of the Duomo? What architect dreamed this monument, which, during the course of years, seems to have depressed the earth round about it, and yet nevertheless rises vapoury and idealistic, like a mystic song?

No one can with certainty give his name. When the Cathedral was conceived, art was an irresistible vocation, a love for beauty without the slightest regard for personal glory. The architect was an artist; associated by a community of ideals, they aspired to the immortality of the work, conceding no importance to the oblivion of the author; and, standing on the heavy movable scaffolds at prodigious heights, on which they defied death, seeing above their heads the blue sky,

beyond whose clouds the imaginations of the Christian dreamers believed they could discern the legions of angels and the irresistible glance of the Eternal Father, they struggled with the marble recently brought from the quarry, caressing it day after day with their chisels, and, inspired more by holy ideals than by correctness of form, which was momentarily buried beneath the ruins of the classic world, they brought forth a whole universe of figures, inaccurate, but possessed of charming ingenuousness; and near the audacious ogive, on the lace-like doorway, or on the robust wall, they left, as a sign of its origin, the carved triangle or the square, the mystic emblem of that race that dwelt apart from the rude warfare of the period, tracing, down at the end of the workshops which were called "architects' cabins," the plans of such famous constructions as the Cathedrals of Cologne and Milan, and following the priesthood of Art with certain rites and secrets.

The only thing that is known with certainty the Cathedral itself proclaims on its façade, in this inscription: *"Il principio dil Duomo de Milan fu ned anno* 1386."

Galeazzo Visconti, the most famous duke of Milan, who revealed a desire to cover the soil of Lombardy with artistic works, was the one who laid the first stone of this Cathedral, the only Gothic monument extant in Italy.

This work, which in reality is the daughter of the influence of the North, could have been produced only in Milan, a point through which passed the kings, the magnates, and the prelates of France and Germany,

who, during the great jubilees of the Middle Ages, proceeded to Rome to solicit, in exchange for substantial gifts, a pardon for their sins, which were not few.

Ogival art had originated as a consequence of the crusades in the countries to the North, which contributed immense contingents to these expeditions; and undoubtedly the continual transit of French and Germans bound for Rome was the thing that determined that the temple begun by Galeazzo should take the form of a Gothic cathedral in a country where the art of the Middle Ages never departed from the Romanic style.

The 14th century, that period that may well be called the golden period of the Middle Ages, astounds one with its works.

Poetry, stifled in blood and fire two centuries before by the Papal Inquisition in the cultured cities of Provence, reappeared, producing the singer of the Inferno, the greatest poet after Homer; the alchemist, scorching his eyebrows over the incandescent flame in which it was believed the philosophers' stone would solidify, came upon discoveries that later developed into the basis for chemistry; architecture, soaring audaciously on the wings of faith, mounted to the greatest heights, and, as the legitimate daughter of an epoch during which war was the natural condition, and peace the rare exception, copied the ogive of the pointed tent of the warrior and the stout pillar of combined columns representing the bundles of lances in the camp.

A century of violent transitions and of rude contrasts, it contained a mingling of the peoples still

dominated by a detachment from earthly things producing a dread of the Millennium, with those who, their eyes on the future, could foresee the Renaissance; a period in which the most intractable popes and the most ruthless monarchs were dominant.

It was an epoch in which poets idealised and embellished the obscure theological monotonies in vigorous tercets, while through the convents circulated "The Eternal Gospel," that book of mystic origin that infuriated Rome, through which an endeavour was made to restore Christianity to its primitive simplicity.

The people, notwithstanding their poverty, made still greater sacrifices in order to create monuments like the Cathedral of Milan, which brought them nearer to a God that either assuaged their sorrows or acted as an implacable avenger; and in the face of this universal mysticism arose the protest of the Albigenses in the person of the Emperor Frederick II of Swabia, the last great monarch of the race of the Hohenstaufen, who, in his poetic retirement in Sicily, read the works of the Greek philosophers, preserved and translated by the Arabs; he held controversies with his good friends, the Saracen doctors of the University of Cordoba; he good-naturedly scoffed the excommunications of the Pope, while watching the dances of the company of bayaderes sent by Saladin; he replied to the anathemas of Rome with manifestos appealing, here in the very Middle Ages, to the tribunal of public opinion, as if he were a democrat of our day; and, in secret, he dictated to his secretary Delavigne the famous book *De Tribus Impostoribus,* in which he

declared that humanity was unhappy because of three impostors: Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, who, with their preaching, had created odious religions, making men behead one another on the field of battle on account of theological questions.

VIII

THE CATHEDRAL FROM WITHIN

I PASSED through one of the gigantic portals decorated with filigree carvings, pushed open the dark grating polished by continual contact with human hands; a moist subterranean wind caressed my face with an icy kiss, and I found myself within the immense cathedral.

One should be a Victor Hugo to describe the impression caused by the interior of these imposing monuments raised by the faith of the Middle Ages.

Five naves separated by enormous columns like those trees in America within which whole houses can be built; so big that the base, seen from a distance, seems insignificant, and, when standing near, one's head does not reach the upper moulding; and, on the capitals, garlands of statues sheltered beneath festoons of carved stone sustaining audacious canopies, round which float tiny clouds of incense, like tatters of the tunic of an angel fluttering about the architectural decorations.

Along the blackened walls, over which the sighs and prayers of five centuries of firm belief seem to have spread a murky film, glow the stained-glass windows with their many-coloured figures, their resplendent mosaics, their groups of luminous flowers, suggesting

a mystic spring drawn from the damp mass of stone by the warmth of the orations and the canticles.

The light drifts down into the centre of the temple, tepid, filtering through the stone lattices of the great lantern like a reflection of the distant splendours of divinity, and in the midst of this vague and gilded atmosphere, sustained by invisible cords, stands out a great crucifix, a Gothic Christ, emaciated, horrifying in its colouring, seeming to be writhing in agony and floating in the atmosphere.

The interesting period in which this temple was conceived, its mediæval character, persist with such vigour that, forgetting that just outside, separated by mere walls, was palpitating the hectic life of the present day with its commonplaces and its delirious activity; ignoring the squads of English people running through the naves looking at everything with their opera glasses; I thought myself resurrected in the midst of the Middle Ages, a plebeian of the duchy of Milan and a subject of Galeazzo; and I thought that my vulgar pantaloons were momentarily about to change to narrow silken hose, that on my breast I wore the coat of arms of the Visconti with its symbolic viper, and that the cane on which I was leaning was about to become a stout sabre like those of the good knights who, armed from head to foot, and reflecting the rays of the sun, seemed to be looking at me from the tall windows.

The breath of divinity seemed to be sweeping through these gigantic aisles. There are no ornate altars here, nor gilded and becurled saints in every

corner, with vestments appropriate for the opera, surrounded by ex-votos and offerings recalling that one of them knows how to cure the toothache and that the other possesses a masterful hand for measles; the whole temple, with its mammoth naves pervaded by a mysterious penumbra, its pavement that frightfully magnifies the sound of one's footsteps, and its walls, in which the skeletons of bishops and magnates stand at rest behind the carved slabs, awaiting the apocalyptic trumpet, is in honour of God, for the incorporate and omnipotent Being that fills all, and who appears greater the farther away one is from His personification.

This absence of images, this gloomy decoration, monotonous and grandiose, that has been raised in honour of the great unknown Spirit, is something that impresses even the most irreligious; I—why deny it? —felt myself stirred to the depths and profoundly overcome in the bosom of the Gothic Cathedral, experiencing an impression almost identical to that which I had suffered a year previous before the great Mosque in Algiers, before the magnificent temple bare of decoration, in which people who are looked upon as savages in Europe know how to communicate with God without the need of interpreters and miraculous images.

Man passes through different ages in his life, and recollections and impressions which are momentarily forgotten, but which are engraved upon his mind as on the phonographic wax, revive and vibrate at the propitious moment.

One must have the courage, the rude frankness of an honest heart, and therefore I confess without a blush that to enter a cathedral like the Duomo of Milan after not having stepped inside a Catholic church for twelve or fourteen years, produces a profound impression that stirs and brings back all the recollections of childhood.

The tender poetry of the finest centuries of Christianity rushed to meet me and embraced me, enveloping me in the Oriental caress of the incense. At every step the columns increased in height, the pavement grew, and new pilasters and larger statues surged in the penumbra of the rear; one's body seemed to shrink, the Spirit to lay aside its earthly garb, and to rise in a spiral to the carved ceilings, while in the atmosphere vibrated a choir of infantile voices, distant, vague, and indeterminate, sometimes as if issuing from beneath the flags, as if they were the tender lamentations of the innocent creatures exiled in limbo; and again as if a tortuous and interminable cordon of cherubim were descending from the luminous lantern, grazing the windows of the ogives with their wings.

I continued rebellious and incredulous toward the dogma, for blindness of faith is a virginity, and virginity, once lost, can never be recovered; but by some strange trick of atavism, I felt the sweet impression that the spectacle of worship causes in one's earliest years; I saw myself a child again, as I was when I used to be taken on a Sunday morning, dressed in my best, to hear the longest mass; breathing the same atmosphere that calmed my fevers during that period

in which reason, scarcely developed, had begun to make a timid and instinctive protest against the absurd obscurity of imposed beliefs; recollections revived, crowding around me, and I thought I could feel on my shoulder the gentle caress of the hand that had taught me to bend my knees, the hand of the mother that, alas! I shall never feel again; a woman who believed in the most respectable and candid innocence, by means of which she accepted the invention of a heaven.

I felt the necessity of drawing myself away from this obsession of strange mysticism and stirring recollections that dimmed my eyes, and I began to climb the stairs toward the roof of the cathedral.

The sunshine and the air of the fields penetrated the broad windows of the great stone caracol, and the impression of a moment ago rapidly vanished.

For more than an hour I wandered in that immense forest of lacy balustrades, of slender needles, of round turrets in whose interior staircases wind up to the open air, and lead finally to the end of the largest needle.

A handful of recruits, good-natured boys, with brown, brutal faces, like those so admirably described by Edmondo de Amicis in *Military Life*, swarmed about the heights, seeking with their eyes, no doubt, the little towns on the extensive Lombard plain where lived their parents and their sweethearts. Some Englishwomen sitting in the shade of the flowery arcades, giving no heed to the shortness of their skirts, and displaying the buckskin boots and the black stockings that covered their skinny calves, were sketching in their

travelling albums the most beautiful statues of this second cathedral built for the birds and the clouds; and, puffing at my pipe, I strolled along the sloping, sun-warmed, marble deck, recalling what had occurred below, and cursing imagination that plays such unwelcome tricks as soon as one finds one's self enveloped in the mysterious atmosphere which time and history give to the works of the past.

When I descended again to the cathedral, thoroughly impregnated with sunshine and fresh air, the vaulted ceilings with their grandeur, their mysterious shadows, and their floating songs scarcely produced an impression upon me. I stood there with the cold indifference of one entering a familiar place.

In the great pulpit to the right a Capuchin with an audacious expression and a long beard was preaching his Lenten sermon, and I stopped to listen.

He was a thoroughgoing Italian. He acted his part like a lyric artist; his words possessed a musical sweetness, and when he ended a period he wiped his lips with a fine handkerchief and then, with a theatrical attitude like that of a tenor at the conclusion of his aria, flung it to an ugly acolyte who stood at his back.

But—farewell, poetry! If any remnant of the impression experienced an hour ago remained, it instantly disappeared.

This friar was a propagandist. Making trills, and running over scales, he was cursing the liberty of the century; by resorting to astute circumlocutions, no doubt through fear of the officials, he was attacking the government of the Italian unity, saying that the

disasters suffered recently in Abyssinia were punishments sent by Heaven, and he made the apologies of that happy period when all Europe was jesting at Italy divided into petty States, while the Pope was King of Rome, and had the Inquisition in full sway for hanging liberals.

And is this the people that represent the gentleness and tolerance of Jesus? Are these the persons charged with maintaining the pure Christian spirit which produced sublime monuments like the Cathedral of Milan?

In the name of the dignity of art, these devil-possessed people should be expelled in order that with their vociferations they may not soil the atmosphere of angelical peace existing in the bosom of the ancient cathedrals which not only arouse the faith of the true believer, but which also impress the incredulous with the obsession of artistic beauty.

IX

THE GALLERY OF THE ARTISTS

IN the Piazza del Duomo, almost opposite the beautiful cathedral, is a gigantic arch as high as the side-aisle roof of the Gothic church, that serves as an entrance to a cross-shaped tunnel of more than a hundred meters, covered by a bold glass roof, and in the lower storeys of which are the most prominent establishments of the city.

It is the Victor Emmanuel Gallery, the gathering-place of the artists of Milan, or of a third part of its population. The view on one side is toward the Duomo, and leaving the gallery from the opposite entrance one stumbles upon the monument to Leonardo da Vinci, in front of which stands the heavy, vulgar mass of La Scala, that famous opera house built in 1778.

Here the renown enjoyed by Milan is well justified wherever people assemble to eat and digest their dinners, becoming familiarised, between fermatas and allegros, concerning the vacillations of Vasco da Gama toward the unhappy Selika, or hearing of the stipulations imposed upon Elsa by the mysterious Lohengrin, persistent in remaining incognito.

Here, eating macaroni in the cheap restaurants, awaiting the moment when the whole world shall ren-

der them justice by bestrewing the pathway of their existence with millions, assemble the recruits and the reserves of art, people so unhappy as to arouse one's sympathy, preparing to enter the temple of glory, singing for five or six pesetas in any municipal theatre of Milan, solely that some newspaper of minor category may mention their names, when they can send a copy home to their families and friends to convince them of the triumphs they are achieving in the land of art.

Here also are the veterans, those who after having been the joy and delight of an entire generation in one part of Europe or another, invest their savings with that Italian craftiness that may be compared only to the avarice of the Jews; and those who, more improvident, must devote themselves in their old age to toilsome occupations to keep the wolf from the door, after having trailed silks and velvets across the stage, and having received the corresponding ovations.

One cannot live in Milan without rubbing elbows at every instant with the veteran artist, the neophyte, or the aggressive pretender who goes on his way, fresh as a head of lettuce, blundering from failure to failure, through hiss after hiss of disapproval.

I live in a house where I have as a landlady an old-time devotee of art, an ancient dame, ugly and almost blind, who, nevertheless, while a dancing girl at the Royal Theatre in Madrid, was the petted favourite of the élite during the latter period of Isabel II. As testimonials of glory there remain in all the apartments, and even in my own room, withered crowns, gewgaws which have figured as gifts, and mag-

nificent photographs of a beautiful woman in the skirt of a ballet dancer, poised on her toes; it seems incredible that her magnificent form could have been changed by time into that skeleton which feels its way along the corridors, scolding the maid in harsh Milanese, telling her to be sure to polish the boots of the *signore espagnoletto* very well, and which still preserves, as a remnant of departed splendour, in her pasteboard-like ears, splendid pendants of emeralds and diamonds. The red-moustached janitor, a sort of gendarme, who also sang in his better days, travelling over Europe as a choir-leader, talks to me in a subterranean voice about Spain, *"Oh, bello paese!"* and above all about its garbanzos, the recollection of which swells his stomach with a grunt of satisfaction. On the first storey there is a theatrical agency, where from morning till night canaries of every description are tried out; and, in the *trattoria,* where, with that marvellous variety of the Milanese cuisine, they serve on certain days rice fried in lard with breaded chops, and on others breaded chops and rice fried in lard, all washed down with the magnificent sparkling Canneto wine, I find at the nearby tables a few tenors who have sung in Spain, having been hissed by the audiences in the galleries and scourged by the press, who look at me as if they remembered having seen me somewhere, and then come to the conclusion that I belong to the class of those who are awaiting contracts.

One lives here as if between the wings. One's neighbour in the adjoining room warbles every moment in order to keep the diamond he cherishes in his throat

well polished; the whole city is a gratuitous concert, and scarcely do you get away from the four main thoroughfares, entering the narrow Milanese streets, minus sidewalks, and cobble-paved, than a hundred discordant pianos sound in your ears; behind a balcony Gioconda is raging with the fury of hopeless passion; higher up Turiddu is singing to the *vino espumegiante;* a little farther on Mephistopheles is laughing; and close to the roof Nelusko is invoking the genius of the tempest. All this without counting the violins and clarinets, violoncellos and horns distributed conveniently throughout all the wards where cheap rooms are to be found, so that, with its rehearsals and studies, the city may be converted into a veritable potful of crickets.

There are two dozen artists here whose names are repeated in the press of the world every moment and who live in the bosom of the aristocracy of Milan. They are those who have managed to accumulate millions, those who possess poetic castles on the banks of Lake Como, those who appear in the streets with the pomp of princes and can attest the words of Jesus: "Many are called, but few are chosen."

If these privileged persons realised the harm they unconsciously cause, possibly they would, to a certain extent at least, conceal the display of luxury and joy of their existence. They are like the little mirrors used in hunting which, on being twirled, attract the incautious larks with their glare. There is not a romantic girl, the daughter of a quiet bourgeois family, or a young clerk, who, on singing a romance at a gathering of friends and receiving the corresponding ap-

plause, does not at once begin to dream of Milan, with its great scenic triumphs, and of the splendid life of the artist petted and indulged by aristocracy. No one ever thinks of the thousands of mediocre artists, or of the failures who sing two months in the year for the wage of a day labourer, and who, even so, frequently are never paid at all; everyone has his eyes glued on the half dozen tenors who earn six thousand francs a night, or on the divas who come to be millionaires and marry Russian princes.

And the people of Milan! If the histories of all these victims of the artistic lure, of all these young people who wear their lives away uselessly, condemned never to achieve fame, could but be written, there would not be a more pitiful story in the whole world. When I see the blond-haired, skinny little English misses who want to be light sopranos; the plump, white-haired Russian girls, or the Andalusian and Madrilenian señoritas, with their bold stare and dashing mien, passing along the arcades of the Piazza del Duomo, bound for the house of their professors with light step and the *spartito* under their arms, I think that invariably, far away, at a distance of many hundreds of leagues, a modest family perhaps is enduring the greatest of sacrifices, depriving itself of bread, in order to make a career for these visionaries of glory, and, after waiting year after year, sinking into poverty with painful abnegation, the only practical result achieved is that the girl who might have been an honourable mother in her own land, ends by becoming a mediocre singer, possibly inducted into something

worse, and seeking contracts by making more use of her eyes than of her voice, or attaining success in unimportant theatres at the cost of her virtue.

Even this is to finish with a cetrain amount of luck. The men, lacking these possibilities of liberating themselves from poverty, grow old strolling through the famous Gallery, existing in an agonising Bohemia, and after so much study and so many sacrifices, emit a successful note only when they entrap some incautious person near La Scala, and after having called him *caro* twenty times, and relating their imaginary triumphs to him, wind up by asking if he happens to have ten lire to help them out of a tight place.

The Gallery is a curious spectacle during the period after the Carnival season when the artists who are out of employment are seeking new contracts for the winter or for the final spring functions.

They form into groups before the great windows of the Gallery, with the air of dukes travelling incognito; they talk of the recent ovations; they offer impassioned eulogies to one another, notwithstanding the fact that, on turning their backs, each will say that the other sings like a dog and that all that story about the applause is a lie, and that they received hisses instead; and they show one another the art periodicals containing eulogistic articles, notwithstanding the fact that they are all in the secret, and know perfectly well that they are paid for at two lire a line.

Happy people, who live perpetually on the stage, and by force of so much overriding of the truth, finally become unbalanced, and no longer realise wherein truth

differs from fiction! They display the diamonds on their fingers with childish satisfaction, they speak with studied reserve of the great ladies who, mad with love, are ready to give up everything and follow them all over the world; they add ciphers in the most scandalous manner to the sums they earn for a season, and, in the last resort, are quite likely to come to blows with anyone in order to avoid paying for a cup of coffee.

When the moment of the great contracts arrives these people take their flight with the utmost ease; they sign a paper for the five parts of the world; they go to Spain as easily as to the United States or to Australia, and they return months later with the same vocal accomplishments, and with identical absurdities of habit, learning nothing on their incessant journeys except the demands of the different audiences and the generosity of the patrons.

Meanwhile, the pariahs, those who never arrive, the Bohemians of Milan, console themselves in the Gallery by talking of the eminent artists who are becoming decadent and of the famous beginners, to whom they deny the slightest merit; they declare in all seriousness that the most prominent composers will not stage their new work unless they consent to take the leading rôle; they tell about scorning contracts for La Scala, yet they never fail to seek any petty agent to inquire whether there is anything for them in some insignificant theatre in Piedmont, and when midnight comes, with weakened stomachs, voices made hoarse with so much lying, their Garibaldian felt hats on the back of their heads, incased in overcoats that almost sweep

the ground, they return to their lairs, sure of the future, with a candour and a will-power that arouse pity, illuminated along their career, like Daudet's Bohemians, by the glitter of the golden scales in which Chimera is ever arrayed.

X

LA SCALA THEATRE

LA SCALA is one of the largest theatres in the world and unquestionably the ugliest and most poorly arranged of all opera houses of renown.

The *foyer* is mean and poorly decorated. The auditorium is of gigantic proportions, with its gildings begrimed, the ceiling papered like a room in a boarding house, with no other illumination than that from a great central lamp which leaves the lower end of the house in a dim, vapoury penumbra. In the same space occupied by a single box in the theatres of Spain, two or three are built, with the result that each one of them is a sort of altar, a narrow window from which peep forth clusters of heads with rigid necks, endeavouring to see and to hear.

The usual display of luxury is made, and yet it cannot be seen; beautiful women attend, but they do not shine; there is such an excess of seats for the wealthy patrons that they are seldom completely filled, while, on the other hand, there is no place whatever for the great masses of the public, and he who can pay only five pesetas spends the evening standing in the corridor or in the company of the ushers and policemen.

These are the inconveniences of the famous Scala; but they may well be endured in view of the notable

presentation of works of art and of the brilliant history of this colosseum.

Ugly as it is, with its dirty staircases, some of which, especially that of the upper storey, recall those leading to certain belfries, it arouses profound emotion in the spectator who crosses its threshold for the first time. This is the Mecca of art, the Vatican of music, the mysterious temple of the surprising heights or of the ruinous falls, where the neophytes undergo the crucial trials of initiation; the Paradise accessible only to the few, the dream of all those throughout the world who devote themselves to tracing notes upon the staff, or to scraping their throats, believing they have something within them.

No theatre has an audience comparable to that of La Scala. The upper galleries are invaded by what in our stage slang are called "typhus," people who enter with complimentary tickets and, for that very reason, are the most restless and discontented of the habitués: artists awaiting contracts; singing professors; pupils preparing for a *début* that never occurs; dancing girls from the conservatory, skinny, sickly, with necks a yard long, who, to the great desperation of their mammas, scarcely swallow a macaroni or two teaspoonfuls of *polenta* during the day, in order to preserve the frailty of their figures in the hope of taking a leading part. The entire crowd of them forms a troupe seated on their bench like judges in the tribune; they examine the person on the stage as if he were a criminal, and although they frequently applaud the *débutante* with that counterfeit gallantry peculiar to the Italians,

scarcely has the curtain fallen than they shout that he sings like a dog. Well may one boast of the honour of having been applauded in La Scala of Milan. Here is no noisy hissing, nor the brusque interruptions common in our theatres, where the opera possesses many points of similarity to the bullfight: the Milanese audience is silent, or at the most it utters a slight murmur of protest while the curtain is raised; but the artist who makes his *début* without hearing applause—not even charity can uplift him.

It costs a huge sum to enter this fortress within which lies artistic reputation. For this reason La Scala has its stirring and interesting legend; the history of the great artist who, poor and unknown, haunted its environs awaiting the hour for making a triumphant entry, receiving on one night of ovation the reward of many days of struggle and privation.

Many years ago, sleeping more than once on the benches around the monument to Leonardo da Vinci, so they say, or taking refuge beneath the arcades of the theatre on winter nights, wandered a young stranger, slender, and with a blond beard, modest, kindly, who never spoke ill of anyone, and who struggled against poverty with the valour of a hero, possessed of no other fortune than the poor cape in which he was wrapped, of no other history than that of having been a hungry chorister in his native land, and a singer who had filled a minor part in an opera, and had been greeted by hisses. That poor Bohemian was called Julian Gayarre. He counted upon no other patronage than that of Professor Blasco (a Valen-

cian who has resided forty years in Milan and is a famous singing master); he had no other support than his adamatine Basque will; during the most difficult moments he contented himself with uttering a Spanish exclamation, continuing on his course; and so, struggling valiantly against the difficulties of art and the torments of poverty, one day he managed to force the doors of the theatre so often contemplated during his nights of suffering, and from that moment began his triumphal career as an idol of art.

To-day the recollection of Gayarre still lingers in the memory of the frequenters of La Scala. The composers declare that, thanks to the Spanish tenor, Wagner triumphed in the greatest theatre of Italy, for the Milanese audience refused to hear *Lohengrin* except when sung by him.

Now the conquest of La Scala is easier. Perhaps remorse, because of the obstacles formerly put in the way of the great artists, has brought about the opposite extreme. To this is due no doubt the frequency of the *débuts* in La Scala and the failures on its stage.

The present impresario is Edward Sonzogno, more noted as a dilettant enthusiast than as a famous editor. He began a few years ago as a newspaper-vender in Milan; to-day he has millions, he is the proprietor of *Il Secolo,* and he daily flings into the street with utter nonchalance two thousand lire, being the sum he loses as impresario of La Scala. An artist rather than a business man, his hobby is to revive artistic Italy so that it shall exercise universal supremacy and recover the prestige lost to it through Wagner. He spares

no means to convert into geniuses his protégés Mascagni, Puccini, Baron Fanchetti, and a number of young professors who group themselves around this Mæcenas risen from the masses, who spends on art what he earns in business. He is strongly attracted by novelty; he presents a new opera each week; he gives no concern to origin; the person who has talent finds a seat at his side, and so great is his eagerness to discover geniuses that, as his enemies say, if a bootblack in the street were to hand him an orchestral score he would open his arms to him and conduct him to La Scala, believing once again to have found the new Wagner, which is his prepossession.

The success of *Cavalleria Rusticana* served to stimulate the enthusiasm of this artist-editor; but unfortunately the protector of Mascagni has presented several other of his works; he urges him to write, he shows him every indulgence, puts up with his vagaries, maintains the pompous luxury with which he has surrounded him, but the second *Cavalleria Rusticana* is not forthcoming.

During the past week there was a brilliant revelation by a new composer, one of the studious legion protected by Sonzogno: Maestro Giordano, a young man of thirty, modest, affable, austere in appearance, brown, and with the prominent black eyes of the good Neapolitan. He is one of those who have struggled to win, living wretchedly by accompanying artists on the piano at the price of a lira an hour; but to-day, after the *première* of his opera, *Andrea Chenier,* the pathway of glory lies open before him.

Giordano's triumph was unanimous; that is conceded even by those newspapers most hostile to the house of Sonzogno. To present in La Scala, an aristocratic theatre, an opera whose action transpires during the height of the French Revolution; to intercalate the Marseillaise into the score two or three times, and to have it applauded with delirious enthusiasm by the audience in the boxes and orchestra seats, is the greatest proof that there *is something* in Giordano, as said his hero "Andrea Chenier," beating his forehead at the foot of the guillotine.

Decidedly Giordano possesses a dramatic force such as has not been revealed for a long time in Italian music. So great is it that, at the end of the first act, when the future conservative Gerard, during the *soirée* of the ancient régime, flings his lackey's coat at the feet of his mistress the marchioness, swearing nevermore to eat the bread of servitude, and to make war on the aristocracy; and again in the third act, when in the very tribune of public welfare the same Gerard rebukes the terrorists and the sanguinary and loathsome populace, saying that they are not the people, for the people are fighting on the frontier for the *patria* and for the Republic, and points to the battalion marching across the background, led by the barefooted youths with the red cap on their heads, beating their great drums, followed by ragged but fiery volunteers with their glittering weapons; and in the last act, when Chenier walks toward the guillotine intoning a hymn to Liberty, in whose name he is being sent to his death, the effect was so great, there was such sublimity

in the music, and the inspiration of the composer seemed so intimately linked with the grandeur of the situations, that this Milanese aristocracy, fervently monarchic, that pursues republicans and approves having the deputies de Felice and Barbatto held incomunicado in a fortress for more than a year, arose to its feet, as if galvanised by an electric current, and applauded Giordano until he became tired of presenting himself on the stage. This, without taking into account a pastoral chorus, the touching scene wherein a blind hand offers to the tribunal of public welfare the last remaining son to defend the Republic, and the final verses written in the dim light of the prison lantern, which Chenier recites at the dawn of the last day of his life; parts possessed, all of them, of an ingenuous and natural melancholy which drew forth a murmur of emotion from the entire auditorium.

The success of *Andrea Chenier* has contrasted strongly with the failure of *Zanetto,* Mascagni's last opera, given its *première* a week before.

Zanetto is Coppée's idyll entitled *Le Passant,* which made a brilliant *début* for the French poet. Mascagni has set it to music and achieved one fiasco more, to add to the painful series of disasters he has suffered after the resounding success of *Cavalleria Rusticana.*

On the night of its *première* I contemplated with painful commiseration the young maestro's carefully shaven, broad face, and his head of bushy hair, that he shook furiously while directing a hastily and carelessly written opera. To see oneself acclaimed by the entire world, recognised as the greatest hope of

art, and paraded in triumph over half of Europe, is the greatest of fortunes, the most seductive of joys; but to find oneself now beneath the gaze of the artistic world that expects something; to have become accustomed to the life of a prince that demands great successes in order to have enormous revenues; to be admired by the most beautiful women; to aspire with youthful inexperience to the fame of the illustrious coxcomb, inventing fashions in bracelets and socks and gloves, each of a different colour, to hear the editors and the public *en masse* demanding new operas equal to or better than the first that he wrote in order that they may continue to admire him, and to feel oneself exhausted, impotent, adding one failure more each time he tries again to embrace glory, is the severest of torments, the most terrible of punishments.

The musician whose first work is hissed has not yet tasted the sweets of success, and he sinks back without an effort into the obscurity whence he emerged; but he who rises, and cannot resign himself to fall, must endure the jealousy of those who avenge themselves for the first success.

Perhaps Mascagni is undergoing a reaction, and he may come back; perhaps the exhaustion, that painful impotence revealed in his most recent work, will disappear; but at present he resembles one of those pale, fragile virgins that were seductive only at the supreme moment, and then immediately began to wither, never developing the splendrous beauty of the matron.

XI

HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC MILAN

AFTER the Duomo, the Castello of Milan would be the most notable historic monument of the city if lamentable neglect had not converted the old Visconti palace into a veritable ruin.

The famous castle of Milan was the work of absolutism, the means of perpetuating the tyranny of a family over the Milanese people. Galeazzo Visconti the second, fearing popular uprisings against the overlordship of his family, determined to establish an asylum-fortress from which it would be possible to dominate the city, so he built this castle, alleging that the main object in view was to provide Milan with a strong point from which to defend herself from external enemies—a subtle, deceptive method that has been imitated by despots in our own day who make a pretence of foreign menace to better dominate the people.

The wealth of the opulent Visconti was revealed in their castle, a warlike nest, within which they led an existence devoted to pleasure, and from which they sallied forth on occasions of disturbance with their companies of mercenaries clad in iron to put the Milanese people to the knife. The tall towers were faced with marble cut into diamond-shaped blocks and

crowned by platforms with pointed canopies roofed with slate. Within the fortified rectangle was the Rocchetta, the ducal palace, with its interminable saloons above, and the extensive quarters for the retinue below.

To-day all that remains of this greatness are the exterior walls with their red-tiled roofs. The four ruined towers with heaps of fallen stones lying at their base have the vipers of the Visconti coat of arms engraved on the exterior, as a token of what they were. Within is a series of grass-grown courts, with crumbling structures, the lower stories and cellars of which are used by the military administration for storing hay.

An explosion of a powder magazine during the time when the castle was in the possession of the Austrians produced the appearance of destruction which the fortress now presents. It looks as if an earthquake had desolated the place.

Nevertheless the passing of Spanish dominion over the former duchy of Milan can best be appreciated in this ruin that lifts its great red tower in the most beautiful part of the modern city. The castle was held by the Spaniards for four centuries, and whether it was that the Italian spirit was more decadent, or that we better knew how to govern, or that the Spanish soldier inspired more fear, the fact is that while the Austrians, in order to sustain their eagles in Milan, needed a garrison of twenty to thirty thousand men, there sufficed for us, in order to maintain our flag, one of those regiments of infantry consisting of poor,

patched soldiers, but more proud and gentlemanly than the king himself, who, with their twisted moustaches and their stiff-pointed swords, undertook to keep the Milanese populace within bounds, and to pay their respects to the Lombard beauties.

One afternoon radiant with sunshine, while the wealthy families were strolling through the court of the Castello bound for the nearby park, I was studying the ruins of the famous stronghold, from which, in the name of the Catholic King, lord of the duchy of Milan, the austere and terrible Leiva governed draconically—he whom the soldiers, with familiar respect, called "Señor Antonio," or the Count of Fuentes, who was the Spanish governor to whom Milan is most indebted. Wandering through the courtyards overgrown with nettles, observing the fallen statues and the demolished walls, I recalled the fortress famous in all the Spanish States, and those ingenuous verses by Quevedo:

> "More alcaldes I have had
> Than the Castello of Milan . . ."

To-day the castle has ceased to exist, and so also has foreign domination of the Milanese soil.

As an evidence of this, in the centre of the court of the Castello, called the Foro Bonaparte, in front of the ancient postern that still preserves the grooves of the drawbridges, stands the equestrian statute of Garibaldi upon a gigantic pedestal. The Italian Cid, grasping the naked sword that drove away the Austrians, the last dominators, seems to be taking oath

that no one shall ever come again to oppress his emancipated country.

If on a journey through Italy one were compelled to describe in detail all the notable things he sees, the chronicle would be interminable.

Here, near La Scala, is the Palazzo Marino, one of the rarest jewels of the Renaissance, an immense building, the product of a caprice of Tommaso Marini, a Genoese merchant of the 16th century, who, by virtue of extortion, became the richest man of his period, and whom the incorruptible Philip II created duke of Newfoundland in exchange for a number of sacks of hard dollars. In the ancient mansion of the noble peddler one may admire those courtyards and those galleries covered with medallions and mythological statues which seem to be miraculously sustained upon the light and slender columns on which the ceilings of the lower storey rest. Garlands of flowers and fruits gracefully festoon the cornices, and the low reliefs represent nude nymphs, voluptuous and plump, fleeing from hairy fauns.

To-day no one remembers this Tommaso Marini, notwithstanding his fabulous fortune and his palace, which seems to be the dream of a sybarite turned to stone; however, close beside this monument to opulence rises a modest statute, that of Alessandro Manzoni, the poet of faith, the ingenuous novelist who narrated the misadventures and sorrows of the poor lovers of the Milanese campagna in inimitable style, and there is not a foreigner who does not salute with veneration the august forehead of the famous writer, in whom

were mingled qualities of immense talent with the affecting abnegation of an unsullied honour.

While for the bibliophile there exists in Milan a veritable treasure, the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, in which the books and manuscripts of Greeks, Latins, Hebrews, Syrians, Chaldeans, Persians, and Armenians are to be found by thousands, for the artist there is the Palazzo di Brera with its gallery of paintings and its museum of antiquities.

In the centre of the great courtyard rises the statue of Napoleon I, by the famous Canova; a work of somewhat questionable taste, as the celebrated sculptor, influenced by the mania of his period for representing heroes of the day lightly clad, in the style of Greek celebrities, sculped the Emperor nude with a mantle folded over his arm, his left hand resting on a lance, while he is pensively contemplating the image of Victory which he holds in his right.

The work is magnificent, a finished type of manly beauty, and I am sure that Napoleon the Emperor, dwarfed, pot-bellied, and fat, would have given the greatest of his battles to have possessed the vigorous chest of this statue, the straight legs harmoniously correct, and the smooth, firm abdomen.

Above, in the vast saloons of the palace, are paintings by Titian, the two Procaccini, Tintoretto, Guido Reni, Salvator Rosa, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, our Velázquez, with a multitude of less-known Italian painters that form the Milanese, the Venetian, Veronese, Bergamasque, Brescian, Mantuan, Cremonese, Parmesan, Bolognese, Ferrarese, and Neapolitan schools, and

among so many hundreds of paintings, some gloomy but striking in their chiaroscuro effects, others as rosy and bright as the Italian fields, stands out the first work of Raphael, the *Marriage of the Virgin*, a picture that has been reproduced millions of times, and of which there is not a city in the world that does not possess a copy in some form or other.

Some English museums have gone so far as to offer as much as four hundred thousand dollars for it, and because of its great value the picture is secluded at the lower end of a small room where it is watched over and guarded as a treasure.

This chief work of Raphael has been accorded greater respect than Leonardo da Vinci's famous *Last Supper*.

You may still be shown in the refectory of the ancient Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie that masterpiece which copyists and engravers have reproduced in such profusion. For a lira (here in order to see the great works of art one must always have a lira handy) you may be shown the great wall adorned by the brush of Leonardo da Vinci, that encyclopædic genius who at the same time was great as a painter, a sculptor, an engineer, and an anatomist, and you may contemplate the original of this thrilling group so often seen in prints and chromos with the luminous head of Jesus in the centre; the Apostles looking at one another with the inquietude of doubt, each thinking that his neighbour may be the traitor; Judas at one end, shaken by the fear that his vileness might be discovered, and in the background, the characteristic door with its two small windows,

that gives to the place of the mystical banquet a certain resemblance to a railway dining car.

The wall on which Leonardo da Vinci painted his famous picture is damp. Time and the water exuding from the wall have peeled the painting, softening the tints, confusing the colours, besmirching the most beautiful figures with white spots; and the final catastrophe is inevitable, notwithstanding all the remedies that artistic admirers endeavor to employ.

Would that it were only dampness and time that have injured these great works!

The friars of Santa Maria delle Grazie, holy men who undoubtedly ate their daily bread in its refectory, giving no heed to the figures painted on the wall, and not even knowing the name of the painter, noticed one day that their food reached them rather cold, because the servants were compelled to take a roundabout route in order to reach the kitchen, and accordingly, to shorten the way, nothing seemed to them more natural than to open a door through the very centre of Leonardo da Vinci's beautiful work.

The door was opened, and to-day, although it is closed up again, there still exists a plaster spot, rising almost halfway through the picture. It is by mere chance that the figure of Jesus has not disappeared.

In this way a blow was dealt to a great work of art; but some sacrifice had to be made in order that the sacred flock might obtain their pasture steaming hot. After that, let modern writers endeavour to explain the "great protection" shown the works of art by the friars.

XII

THE CERTOSA OF PAVIA

THE steam tramway leaves Binasco behind, with its castle that resembles a farmhouse, where the unfortunate Beatrice di Tenda was decapitated because of jealousy, and a quarter of an hour afterward we alighted in front of a remnant of an ancient wall, perforated by an oval doorway, from which starts a broad straight road leading across the green fields and past murmuring streams.

At the end of this road, enveloped in the golden vapours of a spring morning, reddened by the bath of the sun, rose the Carthusian monastery of Pavia, resembling one of those colossal abbeys created by the fantastic brush of Gustave Doré: it consists of several groups of white buildings crowded together in harmonious disorder, and is crowned by a series of airy galleries which sustain the final cupola.

The morning was marvellously beautiful. The green plain lay outspread to the horizon; the crickets were singing in the tops of the mulberry trees, and the frogs in the depths of the green pools; at the sound of our footsteps the cows lifted their moist muzzles from the fertile meadow and gazed at us with great melancholy eyes; the children of the fields rushed out to meet us, barefooted and brick-coloured, their hats pulled down

to their ears, asking us for a soldo with their pretty yet dirty mouths; the attractive contadine passed along, their fans of steel in their hair, and their legs bare, suggesting figures escaped from a chromo, burdened like beasts, but smiling mischievously at the group of travellers; in the atmosphere, laden with light, with colour, and with sylvan aromas, the hymn of peace and labour seemed to be vibrating. From time to time a shout, the calling of one labourer to another to assist him at his task, and upon the green background the lightning flash of the hoes scratching the fertile bowels of the earth. Yet, nevertheless, this corner of the world where the friars seek tranquillity, and the Lombard peasant vegetates in the most monotonous of existences is famous because it recalls the gigantic clash of the two greatest armies of the world.

One's gaze sweeps eagerly over the plain that separates the monastery from the neighbouring city of Pavia. There, on that pile of roofs and turrets, stood "Señor Antonio," the invincible Leiva, stubbornly defying the close-packed wall by which the King of France, at the head of the most showy and brilliant of armies, undertook to force him to surrender; and in these fields, which now gently wave their green stalks in the tranquil breeze, our famous regiments, those soldiers who gave imperishable glory to the Spanish infantry, routed and conquered with their indomitable firmness the French gendarmery, which had until then been considered the finest cavalry in the world.

Studying the landscape, and thinking of the gigantic

struggle to which it once served as a setting, we approached the monastery. This seemed to grow in size momentarily, and to develop new beauties before our eyes, as if it were gradually rising from the ground; until at last we stood within the spacious court which is enclosed by the façade of the church, the ancient Visconti palace, and the immense dependencies of the convent.

The Carthusian monastery at Pavia is the Escorial of the ancient dukes of Milan. Here they spent their wealth, here they brought the leading artists of Italy. There is not a handbreadth of marble on the entire exterior that has not been caressed by the chisel of an artist, and in the interior there is not a wall that has not been beautified by frescoes.

Interminable low reliefs representing the great battles of the dukes of Milan, their family festivals and their burials; medallions of green marble on which the profiled heads resemble oxidised bronze; energetic figures of stone covered with mail, the helmet at their feet, leaning on their swords, and gazing into the distance with their dead eyes, as if eternally foreseeing the approach of the enemy, form the façade of the temple which, seen from a distance, resembles an immense mass of white embroidery with green flowers.

Within is the brightest and most voluptuous of temples, its high blue ceilings besprinkled with silver stars; its stained-glass windows, which fling over the marble pavement a restless carpet of colours that seem to live and palpitate; the altars covered with bright-hued frescoes rising to the cornices; all the doors of

delicately carved marble, with a world of graceful little figures peeping from between the arabesques and the foliage; the interminable choir, with its two rows of monumental stalls, tipped by pinnacles and belfries of dark wood, as if each one were a cathedral, and on the portals of the two sacristies the medallions of the seven marriages that bound together the crown of Milan: on one side the dukes, shaven and bushy-haired, with helmets tipped by the symbolic viper or with pointed fleecy birettas; and on the other side the duchesses, superb dames with heavy noses, round double chins, and with an air suggestive of barmaids; women capable either of presiding over a *soirée* in the Castello of Milan, or of mounting a horse and riding forth to battle.

In the transept are many paintings of the 15th century, the white habits of the Carthusian monks standing out against the dark background, and before the choir the tomb of Galeazzo Visconti, an enormous block of marble upon which, beside the recumbent figure of his wife, lies the statue of the duke, his pointed shoes peeping from beneath his toga, his enormous sword resting upon his breast, and, falling over the hilt, his pointed beard, which in the æsthetic conception of the present day contrasts grotesquely with his upper lip, which is absolutely hairless.

With the expulsion of the friars the monastery has become secularised, and groups of travellers wander through the temple without even removing their hats, staring at everything with profane curiosity.

We were strolling about the pleasant church, study-

ing its points of beauty and commenting upon them with enthusiastic exclamations, and, whether because of our language, or because of a certain instinct that ever drew us on to delight in the most notable and select works, the fact is that we attracted the attention of a blond, cultured gentleman with intelligent eyes to whom the guards and cicerones bowed as to a superior.

He was Signor Carlo Giani, the curator in charge of the preservation of the historic monuments of Lombardy; a genuine artist and conscientious antiquarian who loves the monastery as dearly as if he had been born within its walls, and he carries on minute investigations throughout the entire Milanese region so that the government shall buy and restore to the National Monument the jewels of art wrested from it by wars and revolutions.

Upon learning that we were Spaniards, he spoke to us with enthusiasm of Charles V, and of the expedition of Pavia, and offered to show us everything, from the cellars to the topmost gallery of the dome.

Accompanied by him, we climbed to the highest part of the cupola, enjoying the view of the Lombard plain and the Alps with their diadems of ice; we descended into the crypts; we ran through the crumbling apartments of the ancient monastery; the kitchens, which with their colossal proportions would have illuminated the face of Pantagruel with a smile; the endless cloisters, their floors overgrown with weeds; the cells, each of which, with its well and diminutive garden, was for each friar a separate house; and the immense gran-

aries, within which sufficient wheat to feed Milan for half a year used to be stored.

The white fathers of the Carthusian monastery well knew how to live. Theirs was an enviable vow of poverty. At the rear of the monastery still exists a lake in which they grew fish for their table, so rare and costly a luxury in Lombardy. They were the proprietors of all the land lying between Binasco and as far as Pavia, or eighteen miles of fertile garden, and their annual crop of wheat yielded them some four millions of reales. Well could it be said of the friar of the monastery, notwithstanding his vows of poverty and humility, that he was richer and more powerful than many a feudal lord.

Signor Giani, giving vent more and more every moment to his enthusiasm for his monument, called our attention to the delicately carved doors along the cloisters; to the arches of red stone with their choice designs, and to the busts and medallions of historic personages; all of which he had been compelled to disinter and to wash, for the good monks of the last century, great protectors as ever of the arts, thought it convenient, in order, no doubt, to overcome monastic filth, to give a coat of plaster to the entire convent, covering all this artistic beauty with whitewash.

We entered the office of our illustrious guide, the veritable studio of an artist, with its antique furniture, its table piled high with historic engravings, its walls covered with ancient pictures, the paintings of the most famous of the Visconti; all pervaded by profound silence, by a delightful penumbra, by that special charm

which invites to meditation and to study. Signor Giani brought out an enormous album on whose leaves are verses, thoughts, or simply the bare signatures of famous men. He overcame our scruples by declaring that all countries were represented except Spain, and while, in memory of the people who three centuries before had immortalised the name of Pavia, we were tracing our unknown signature, Signor Giani, assisted by a beautiful contadina of fourteen years of age, who trod barefooted with the mute lightness of a phantom about the beautiful room, filled our glasses with the magnificent green chartreuse which is made at the monastery, and offered us the water from the ancient cistern, which, with its pleasant taste, clearly denoted its monkish origin.

We toasted, I know not how many times, the heroes of Pavia, the Italian Pescara, and the Spaniard Leiva; we even dedicated a toast to Galeazzo Visconti, "my illustrious lord," and, with our stomachs thoroughly warmed by the green liquor with its infernal reflections, we went in quest of Signor Carlo Giani's final surprises.

In a small museum which he has arranged in an ancient capitulary room, we were shown Galeazzo's sword, a piece of iron eaten by rust; his gold-plated spurs and a photograph of his cranium, and that of his wife; they were nothing but pitiable skulls, with their eternal smile and empty eye-sockets, as repugnant as that of any villager of Milan, those plebeians whom the nobles used to treat with scorn, as persons belonging to an inferior caste.

We traversed a labyrinth of damp corridors, climbed

the rickety steps of a stairway, and finally came upon a vaulted room with bare walls and no other decoration than a great fireplace, and, in the centre of the ceiling, the coat of arms of the dukes of Milan.

That poor room, that wretched hovel, unworthy of the attention of any tourist, caused our Spanish hearts to leap with accelerated beat.

There Francis I was sheltered after the disaster of Pavia. That was his first prison after falling into the hands of the Spaniards. Four bare walls, a barred window, and the bed of a friar were the only things possessed that night by the "gentlemanly king," who, the day before, at the head of a brilliant army and of the most famous paladins, jested at the Spanish troops and at the Flemish crown with the diadems of Spain and of Germany.

I pictured to myself the first night of the king, accustomed to the soft ease of the Louvre, or to the splendour of his campaign tent, pacing gloomily up and down the wretched convent room, or gazing through the heavy iron bars upon the dismal fields where the flower of the French cavalry, the paladins of the Persian tourneys, those youths who either composed madrigals at the court festivals, or hurled themselves lance in socket upon the close-packed enemy lines, lay in pools of blood, encased in their suits of steel.

Upon being taken prisoner, the King of France begged the austere Leiva not to take him to Pavia, for it would be painful torment to enter as one conquered into a city to which he had been laying siege, and Señor Antonio, gentleman and scholar that he was, capable

of understanding such scruples, guarded him in the monastery while awaiting the orders of his sovereign, Charles V.

A sorrowful entrance, that of the vanquished king into the famous monastery! It still seems as if he can be seen in the dim twilight, striding up and down the deserted cloisters, bereft of the sword which Pescara sank to his knees to receive from the defeated king, his glittering Milanese armour creaking at every step; his vizor raised, revealing his pale angular face begrimed with the sweat and dust of battle; his white plumes grazing the archway of the doors, his tall figure stooping as he passed along the low corridors.

When the prisoner entered the church the white-robed monks were singing in the choir, and as they concluded a psalm, Francis I replied to them by entoning the one following.

Happy times were those! The kings, as a rule, were theologians, and in order to while away their time, defended theses with as great aplomb and wealth of wisdom as a canon.

It is true that science was not at its best, and this is proved by the fact that Francis I died of a shameful disease which to-day can be cured by any student. But the ease with which the gentlemanly king, or Henry VIII of England, employed Latin for making love to their mistresses, was a perfect joy.

XIII

THE POET OF SOCIALISM

MAY TURIN, the historic city of Piedmont, pardon me, but I declare that if, varying the itinerary of my journey through Italy, I am here, it is not for the purpose of seeing its architectural beauties, its long, broad, straight streets with infinite arcades, and its sumptuous palaces that date from the period when it was the capital of the kingdom of Sardinia, but merely to see a man, to clasp a hand which, like that of Cervantes and that of Calderón, wielded the sword of the soldier with as great dexterity as the pen of the writer.

Beliefs and friendships may change; that which we adored yesterday we may with indifference to-day see converted into ruins; frequently the brain is like a magic lantern where the pictures of the sharpest outlines and brightest colours melt away and become obliterated, giving place to new impressions; the only immutable thing, that which endures, is affection, admiration for one's literary idols, for those who have made us feel, and, in the seclusion of the library, surging from the pages of the book, have compelled us to shed tears or to smile placidly with quiet appreciation of artistic beauty.

This kind of hero-worship, that aroused by De

Amicis, dates from my earliest reading. Before being stirred by the overwhelming strength of Zola, or before rejoicing over the prodigious narrative power of the magic Daudet, I had already read, more than thirty times, concealing myself in the corners of the college, and often hiding the volume beneath my coat, the enchanting stories of the Italian Sub-lieutenant; his *Military Life,* which idealises the army, "the religion of every honourable man," as said our classic.

How many a time later in life, after having read De Amicis, on closing the book have I experienced the constant desire: "If ever I go to Italy I must know you; I must clasp the strong hand of him who knows better than any other how to make the heart glow with tenderness, and to fortify the spirit with noble sentiments."

The morning following my arrival in Turin I realised my ambition. No more was needed than a simple letter requesting an interview with the great poet, who hides his universal glory in an ordinary dwelling on the Piazza dello Statuto; and Edmondo de Amicis, the greatest Italian author, the prose writer revered by all the mothers of Europe and America, the personification of intellectual Italy, with the naturalness of men who are really great and who do not fear to be seen at close range, instead of waiting for me to come to his house, came to mine.

Many years will pass before that impression fades. I recognised him at a distance; it was the De Amicis so often reproduced in illustrations and as a frontispiece in his works; the beautiful august head which was

already familiar to me; the vigorous nose of purest lines; the immense luminous eyes, reflecting as in a gilded mirror the glow of a great brain ever in a state of activity; the slightly opened mouth beneath a heavy moustache, a smile of exquisite kindness flickering upon his lips; the broad forehead somewhat receding, as if better to receive inspiration, crowned by an aureole of curly hair, and his robust body, which was moulded in a uniform during his youth, almost athletic, erect, as befits a valorous man who had travelled much.

It was the same De Amicis, yes; but with hair no longer black; with hair thick, but as white and brilliant as silver, for not in vain do fifty years pass, nor without effect does one devote himself for thirty to producing literature that will endure as long as the world continues to have readers in it.

De Amicis speaks Spanish slowly, with some slight difficulty, but he speaks it well, and he remembers with the enthusiasm of youth, and with the joy of an artist, when he was twenty-eight and was travelling through Spain.

With characteristic kindness, which disturbed me greatly, as if I were a companion worthy of him, some famous colleague, or a friend of many years, he began to speak of his socialistic beliefs, of the fatiguing work he is carrying on for the propaganda of the great ideal of the emancipation of labour.

Generous heart! I believe that Edmondo De Amicis, had he been born in other centuries, would figure to-day on the altars, like one of those saints who endured a life of sacrifice for the sake of relieving human suffer-

ing. The great poet does not know how to hate, but he loves as does no other. The humble, the obscure, those who suffer, have ever been his fount of inspiration.

When he was an officer, the homesick recruit wrested from his family, the crude assistant obsequious to his master, all the lowest and the most despised members of the army were they who won the caress of his inspiration and his tenderness. Later he devoted his attention to instruction, and he idealised the schoolmaster who wears himself out in this most monotonous and fatiguing of professions, attracting to him universal attention. To-day he turns his gaze upon the labouring man, and he does not curse social injustice in epic tones, because his heart vibrates with nothing but love and sympathy, but he does the great service of sweetening, of enveloping in the divine splendour of poesy, the aspirations of socialism which, having until now been blackened and calumniated, alarmed that neutral mass which ever gives ear to tales of others and blindly believes everything it hears.

Admirable soul! His beliefs are intimately bound up with the acts of everyday life. If he did not believe in the future of humanity, if he thought, as do so many, like the illustrious Pangloss, that we are living in the best possible of worlds, De Amicis would be enjoying all the mundane pleasures; but the poet is on the side of the fallen, of the labourer, who produces everything, and is deprived of everything; of the innocent child who, as soon as he opens his eyes, finds himself bound to poverty by a firm knot that is undone only by death; of the poor woman who, because of social dis-

organisation, ever finds the hands of virtue empty, and hesitates and weeps before the bread offered her by vice.

De Amicis is one of those that devote themselves body and soul to the cult of an ideal. Socialism has deprived pleasing literature of a great artist. Popular vote placed him in an official position in Turin, and, being absorbed in organising the schools, he turned his back temporarily upon his art. Devotion to party invariably brings disaster to the writer. The great poet of universal renown, whom the Parisian press, so exclusive and so critical, places on a level with her own noted writers, frequently lays down his pen to serve as counsellor to a fireman or to a street-sweeper. He has just given up his official position, but has not as yet returned to his novels, and he is devoting his pen wholly to the socialistic cause.

Walking about the streets of Turin, he spoke with enthusiasm of the great lecture he was preparing for the celebration of the first of May, for, although he is a famous orator, he has no great gift for impromptu speaking; and while listening to him I was at the same time noticing the effect caused by his presence in the streets of this city that adores him; upon seeing him the labouring men turned very grave, uncovering with affectionate respect; the women nudged one another, pointing out the poet with a mute sign; the good bourgeoisie turned and looked, lamenting in their hearts, no doubt, that so great a brain should devote itself to reforming what for them is perfectly well arranged; and De Amicis, smiling kindly, replied to the

salutations, never ceasing to speak in his mellow, sonorous tenor voice, sometimes of his ideals, or again of his travels, recalling with enthusiasm the beauty of the Valencian vega.

We arrived at his house, which proved to be the workroom of a student. Books in close-packed rows almost to the ceiling; the disorderly table, denoting the indefatigable worker; bronze busts; photographs of his friends (and what friends!), some, like Victor Hugo, Dumas, and Augier, now dead, and others still living, like Zola, Daudet, Verdi, and all the celebrated writers of Italy; and at the lower end of the room, discoloured now by the years, a group of photographs which are souvenirs of his journey: the Mosque at Córdoba and Santa Sophia of Constantinople, the great buildings of the Argentine Republic, and the bull-ring of Valencia; groups of Moors in the vicinity of Tangiers, and pairs of Valencian peasant women.

In the atmosphere of the room I thought I could perceive the contact, the throbbing of a whole world, which has surged forth within it under the warmth of poetic inspiration.

Clutching at the table, thrusting his little blond head in between us, I saw the youthful protagonist of Cuore; before the closed door, weapon in hand, strode the rude recruit who falls wounded by a treacherous stone and who pardons his aggressor; in the play of the ray of sunshine entering through a balcony, passed the Italian transatlantic, reduced by fantasy, bearing its cargo of intrigue and of absurdities across the ocean; Saltafinestra, the petty thief and bully, with his vicious face,

was peering behind a wardrobe, as if seeking the cross-eyed little teacher of the urchins of the labouring class, in order to give her his ardent kiss; in the sounds floating in from the adjacent Piazza I thought I could hear the melancholy song of the mad Carmela vainly searching for her lieutenant.

When one has risen to the greatest heights of art without letting go the hand of truth; when the imagination has created personages of flesh and blood, and not straw puppets moved by the spring of romanticism, the characters ever dwell round about the poet, and it is impossible to approach him without their putting in appearance as if they were old friends.

I gazed at De Amicis, instinctively following the course of the conversation, but thinking of quite different things. My adoration must have become evident in a most stupid manner, which surely the poet, in his unbounded kindness, forgave me.

I was thinking of the immense power, of the incomparable force, possessed by this man for embellishing all things. He sang of military life, and the young men became seduced by discipline, to which he attributed a poetic atmosphere, and by the comradeship of arms which he arrayed in tender sublimity. He discovered dramas in the monotony of teaching that nobody would have guessed; he turned the village schoolmaster into an inspiring priest, and he painted teachers who will live longer than the heroines of romance. At present he is waving that fairy wand of his, that gilds and embellishes whatever it touches,

over socialism, and those who are interested in having the world continue eternally as it is, may well tremble.

Poets are terrible when they devote themselves to the service of a revolutionary ideal.

De Amicis is not a man of action; he believes, as does Bebel, that it is stupid to give occasion to governments to test the range of their guns on the flesh of the labouring man. He entrusts everything to propaganda, but he is sure that with his poetic writings, with his inspiring narràtions, and with his book *Socialism,* which will soon appear, he will make more converts than Marx and Engels with their dry scientific statements.

We are Latins, and are dominated by the imagination; we respond rather to the caress of art than to the vibrations of sentiment.

Lamartine made more republicans with his epic picture of the Girondists, and Victor Hugo with his apocalyptic apostrophies to kings, than did all the philosophic defenders of the Republic.

The day when these tender odes written by De Amicis in the form of articles are scattered throughout the Latin world, softening the asperities of the new doctrine, dreaming of the humanity of the future, poetising human fellowship, and revealing the sweetness bound up in the word "companion," generous and enthusiastic youths will rush forth from the universities proclaiming socialism, as we leave, obsessed by the great poets of the Revolution, vowing eternal faith to the Republic.

Continue your task, glorious and indefatigable worker!

The unknown and obscure admirer, one more of the many who pass before you as mere interpreters of the adoration you inspire in the Latin peoples, takes his leave, satisfied and proud, cherishing in his memory a reflection of your luminous glance, and still feeling on his breast the throbbing of that great heart, which is the true organ of your thought!

If Rome, with her historic greatness; Naples, with her smiling beauty; Florence, with her atmosphere of the Renaissance; and Venice, with her imposing death-like silence enwrapped in brilliant vestments, do not detain me, I will return to mingle here in the fraternal feast of work, and to watch you, great poet, strewing with flowers the pathway along which shall come a new world destined to pulverise that of the present.

XIV

THE DEAD CITY

AT last I am in the true Italy, the traditional, the typical Italy, the one we have so often beheld in novels and in books of travel; the Italy of historic ruins, of ciceroni, of beggars, and of tips.

Northern Italy, which is the choicest part of the peninsula, the most virile and active, the real cradle of national unity, palls, nevertheless, because of its lack of character. It is an adulterated France. Milan and Turin, aside from the interest of their monuments, on account of the customs and character of the population, seem like great capitals of some department of France.

As it is better, in order to see modern life, to go and contemplate it in the original than to study it in the imitation, and as he who comes to Italy desires to see the typical, the genuinely national, so, after having been thirty-eight hours in Turin, I left the Piedmont capital well pleased with the thought that, at one bound, I would land in the heart of the Peninsula, and not stop before reaching Pisa.

I passed again through Genoa, and from the windows of the station restaurant, while we passengers were breakfasting, could see the forest of pennants and flags and the compact crowd of people massed around

the monument of the Duke of Galliera, which was being unveiled: a colossal statue with which the Ligurian city corresponds to the patriotic unselfishness of that distinguished man who left a fortune of twenty million lire for the completion of the works of the port.

Once again in the train, the splendid beauty of the Mediterranean coast began to unfold: the green hills, dotted by the white and pink of voluptuous villas; the little towns with their slender belfries and red roofs clinging audaciously to the sharp peaks, almost overhanging the steep declivities; the sea combing its fringes of foam on the dentated borders of the coast, its green and silvery surface shining with every undulation; and from time to time, on the toasted sands of the shore, the little fishing villages with their boats drawn up on the beach, and round about them a swarm of black dots, like laborious ants who tug at ropes to the tune of the melancholy "Ohé!"—who fling themselves into the water, and who never rest; all this in order barely to placate hunger.

After three hours' travel we arrived at Spezia, the great military port of Italy, an extensive, deep bay surrounded by high hills crowned with batteries, having in its centre some cruisers being repaired, black monsters having more the appearance of floating castles than of boats, possessed of no other nautical characteristic than the robust, tower-like chimneys, and a simple mast whose conning towers were like fortresses.

Spezia disappeared from view and likewise, soon after, did the sea; our way led through forests of pine and olives a few kilometers distant from Carrara, a

small town, but one of universal fame, scarcely distinguishable at the foot of the great hills, which, with the large white spots made by the marble quarries, gave the appearance of being covered with snow.

At all the stations in the vicinity the freight trains take on enormous blocks of the costly stone, and the rivers of the region present a strange appearance with their rocky beds all glistening white, as if made of frozen milk. The mountain torrents, in their rapid descent, drag down the fragments from the quarries, and the Tuscan rivers flow over rolling stones of marble.

Perhaps it may be an effect of the imagination, but as the train approaches Pisa it seems as if one can feel the proximity of the *citá morta é cadutta,* of which Dante sang.

The campagna is beautiful; the silvery leaves of the olive trees flutter in the breeze that blows in from the distant sea; the close-packed crowns of the pines sway with a loud swish, as if crowding against one another, protesting at the lack of room; from time to time glimpses are caught of scarcely distinguishable lakes covered by heavy growths of rushes; and on their shores canoes, cracked and injured by the sun, lie stranded in the mud; but few houses are visible, and only occasionally is the monotony of the panorama relieved by a lonely human figure, giving the impression that the country is deserted, or that it has just been swept by an epidemic.

We cross the Arno, which, because of its width and the colour of its waters, resembles an arm of the sea;

we catch fleeting glimpses, as of a white phantom flitting before the window, of the famous leaning tower, and at last we set foot on the soil of the celebrated ex-Republic of Pisa.

Decidedly it is a dead city. On the left bank of the Arno the affluence brought in by strangers, and the relative prosperity given to Italy through political unity, have created a new city, with great hotels and broad straight streets, modern in character; but immediately that one crosses the Ponte di Mezzo he finds himself in the very Middle Ages.

The streets, destitute of sidewalks, and paved with great flat stones like those used in interiors, seldom echo the footsteps of an occasional visitor. On both sides are dark and gloomy porticoes, along which it seems as if the Florentine dagger of the ambuscades may suddenly flash forth. Set into the walls, being used as ordinary construction material, are beautiful Roman capitals, fluted columns, blocks of red stone containing low reliefs in which one sees the Pisan galleys with all their sails unfurled; at the corners, half obliterated by the sirocco and the rains, Byzantine paintings, images with immense eyes, scanty clothing, and gold nimbuses, before which, in olden times, the fiery corsairs of Pisa used to uncover, but which to-day are stoned by the urchins; and all these tall, narrow houses were constructed for defence according to the mandate of the old Council of the Republic, which, in order to have the walled circuit stronger and more compact, required that the citizens should occupy little space.

The old palaces of the Pisan patriciate are to-day converted into hotels in order that they may yield some revenue. I have as a room a chamber so large that it would be made over into a house in Spain, and its marble pavement, with its mythologic paintings on the ceiling and its walls besprinkled with fleur-de-lis, gives so vivid a suggestion of the past century that there are moments when I marvel that the porter (an obsequious fellow with a heavy moustache who knows as many as six words of Spanish, and who calls me "Señogito" every moment) does not present himself in a long coat and wig.

From the marble balcony I see the green Arno flowing down below; it is ever deserted, doubtless in order not to disturb the calm of the city. If there still remain some signs of life, it is because of the numerous garrison, and of the famous University, which has about six hundred students.

Oh, the power of time! This city, now as tranquil as a tomb, figured in history for the space of three centuries as a dreaded power, worried powerful Venice, and irritated audacious Genoa.

When the Council of the Ancients convened, and the war horn rang through the narrow streets calling the marines and the men to arms, four hundred warships descended the now tranquil Arno, the banner of the Republic, with the lioness giving her udders to the two cubs, waving at their mastheads, and the Saracens on the coast of Africa trembled, and all the islands where floated the green standard of the Prophet sprang to the defence.

From the 9th century Pisa was the town most feared by the infidels. Her marines were audacious pirates; nothing was safe where they disembarked. They fought better than the Venetians, and Genoa needed her alliance when undertaking enterprises involving any great risk.

The audacity and the tenaciousness with which this small Republic ever hunted and fought the Saracens is astounding. It may be said that it is due to her that the Mussulman warriors did not make themselves masters over the whole of Italy.

In the year one thousand she flung them out of Calabria; three years afterward she crushed them in Cavitavecchia, and in one thousand and twenty-two she defeated them in Sardinia and took possession of the island, governing this extensive domain through a council of Pisan patricians. She conquered the islands of Lipari, of Corsica, and of Elba; she laid Palermo under tribute; she went audaciously to the principal nest of hostile piracy, to Tunis, and burned the enemies' ships at the very entrance to the port, and sacked the city. Helping in the crusades, loaning her squadrons to the Christian armies, she made herself mistress of the principal ports of Syria, and in eleven hundred and forty-four, before our Don Jaime the Conqueror was born, she prepared a single fleet of three hundred and forty ships for the purpose of wresting the Balearic Islands from the Saracens.

She would have succeeded, for her marines had carried through even greater undertakings, but the glory of the small Republic had aroused the envy and

jealousy of all the Italian cities, especially that of Genoa, many times her ally but at heart her implacable rival. The *Consuetudine maritima*, a pact for the mutual benefit of both Republics, a treaty which has served as a base for modern maritime and commercial law, was broken, and the Genoese and Pisan ships, which had sailed side by side to the taking of the Holy Sepulchre, sought one another on the high sea, engaging in a war which, with the exception of short periods of truce, lasted eighty-four years. Finally, at the end of the 13th century, near the island of Meloria, off Leghorn, the final combat occurred, the Genoese Armada winning the day, due to the treachery of Count Ugolino della Gherardesca, who, by way of punishment, was shut up in a tower with his sons and condemned to starve to death, a horrible torture described by the inspiration of Dante with his imposing grandeur.

After this Trafalgar, Pisa, who entrusted everything to maritime war, began to suffer the effects of rapid decadence. As the principal port of Tuscany, she still enjoyed importance during the times of the Medici, with their Order of Knights of Saint Stephen, which, in imitation of the Knights of Malta, went out upon the sea to fight the Turkish pirates of Constantinople. But the Mediterranean, as if also jealous of the glories of the valorous city, has been receding with alarming rapidity, and now the distance from Pisa to the mouth of the Arno is double what it was during the times of the famous Republic.

But if Pisa is to-day a phantom existing on the recollections of the past, she still possesses the con-

solation of having all the world come to see what remains of her old-time dignity.

Her present fame is sufficiently justified by merely the Piazza del Duomo, endlessly reproduced in drawings and in photographs, which we have all seen innumerable times without ever having come to Pisa. The traveller who arrives here has no other desire than to see at close range the famous tower with its alarming and daring inclination.

The afternoon was declining when I left the hotel, after leaving my poor valise, more filled with papers and books than with clothing.

On the banks of the Arno, near the Ponte di Mezzo, the central point of the city, swarmed the Sunday crowd. I walked away from the river, entering the ward of Saint Stephen, the most ancient in the city. Here the Middle Ages still prevail. My steps resounded as in a cemetery. I traversed half a dozen streets without meeting any one except two old women who were returning from church. The melancholy tolling of a bell sounded above the roofs, beneath a sky saturated with rain and filled with the golden glow of sunset. I crossed the Piazza dei Cavalieri studying the marble statue of Cosimo, the great Medici, clad in a coat of mail, his sword at his belt and fiercely crushing the head of a dolphin beneath his feet, all of which has not prevented the youngsters with their stones, or the rioters with their shots, from having deprived him of his nose and knocked two fingers off the right hand which he is extending with sovereign mien. As I walked along the deserted streets I could

hear a slight creaking of blinds, and could catch glimpses through the tiny apertures of pink noses, blond curls, big blue eyes opened wide in curiosity, and of immense gold hoops that adorn and complete these Italian heads, which are as beautiful as Madonnas; and finally I came upon the Piazza del Duomo, or rather, the vast meadow where the Pisan Republic raised its imposing monuments of marble.

Imagine a broad evergreen field, extending as far as the city wall, and upon which, set haphazard, as a child flings down his toys, are the leaning tower, the Duomo, and the Baptistery. This is the famous Piazza.

Night was fast approaching. The last rays of the setting sun gilded the marble walls and the slender galleries of the famous Campanile, which, enveloped in a nimbus of fantastic light, seemed really to be falling in a single piece.

In the entire expanse of the great Piazza there was no one except a troop of barefooted, chunky urchins, rolling on the grass like turbulent dogs, and who, on seeing a stranger, made a dash at him to ask for a soldo, or at least a cigarette.

On the marble steps of the Cathedral, huddled together as if swept into a heap by the broom of misery, were a few blind beggars and cripples, the first Italians I have seen to frankly ask for alms and not a tip.

I entered the Cathedral just in time to be put out by the sacristans, who were about to close the doors. The canons were leaving the choir muttering their final

prayers; veritable canons of a poverty-stricken city, in which there are no charitable donations or wealthy penitents,, they were thin and bony, with enormous noses, greasy robes, their bonnets besprinkled with dandruff, their cassocks covered with spots, and possessed, all of them, of the voracious air of that licentiate Cabra, depicted by Quevedo.

When I came away the deserted Piazza was already enveloped in the penumbra of twilight, and a few steps farther on I received such an impression that I even wondered for a moment whether I were awake and in Italy, or dreaming in my bed at home, and if all I had seen until now were nothing but a nightmare.

A short distance away, along a path leading across the sward of the Piazza, like phantoms barely touching the ground with their feet, appeared a company of hooded beings enveloped in flowing black gowns, with their faces covered like those who figure in the processions of Good Friday. A monumental Christ, livid and streaming blood, covered by an exequial canopy, was being borne in advance; behind, in double file, came torches with sputtering flames, suffusing the atmosphere with a funereal odour, and, closing the procession, was a coffin covered by a cloth embroidered with I know not how many skulls.

All this display, recalling some fantastic legend or auto-da-fé at that hour of apparitions and mysteries, was merely the funeral of some poor obscure devil; for here it is the custom to carry the corpse accompanied by these terrifying ceremonies, and any dead man would consider himself dishonoured if he were

not borne to his final resting-place surrounded by hooded mourners and flambeaux.

I thought of the ear-splitting scream and the mortal terror of any Spanish woman had she suddenly chanced upon this horrifying retinue. I followed it with my gaze, watching until it became lost to view behind the door in a wall, an oval through which the faint sunset glow could still be seen, and I walked away thinking of Don Felix de Montemar, Espronceda's perverse student who, while tramping about the streets of Salamanca at night, stumbled upon his own funeral.

In this dead city there are no nocturnal diversions, and, as the statues on the dark, mediæval streets, notwithstanding their fantastic appearance, no longer gesticulate, nor witches flutter about the belfries, nor hobgoblins hiss from behind stone pillars, nor even the devil makes his appearance in red cape with cock's plume in his hat, and with the hoofs of a goat, to purchase souls by virtue of a contract, charming entertainments which, alas! with the impiety of the times have gone out of date, I was compelled to enter the hotel and to go to bed at nine o'clock.

XV

RECOLLECTIONS OF PISA

GREAT as was my impatience to see again the beautiful Cathedral of which I had caught but a hasty glimpse in the pale sunset light, nevertheless on my way thither early the next morning I was compelled to stop in the Piazza dei Cavalieri, in front of the mutilated statue of the Grand Duke Cosimo I.

Here is the Palace of the Knights of Saint Stephen, a great mansion that is used to-day for a normal school, displaying on its façade the busts of the seven sovereign dukes of Tuscany, who were Grand Masters of the Order. On one side is the church of Saint Stephen, a building by no means notable, but having a principal nave that is of interest because of the originality of its decorations.

Everything wrested from the Turks by the Knights of Saint Stephen while sailing throughout the Mediterranean in the swift galleys that were the terror of the Mussulman pirates, is to be found here serving as decorations for the Christian temple. Turkish flags, some red with Arabic inscriptions and crescents embroidered in gold; others of many colours, forming a bewildering mosaic, are displayed by the hundreds, festooning the cornices, or spread out upon the wall as

trophies torn from hostile vessels by these Knights who were half friars and half marines, and who, with the cross on their breasts and an axe in their hands, leapt upon the decks made slippery by streams of blood. Here are the standards of the Order, torn by the grapeshot of the bombards, blackened and begrimed by the smoke of combat and rent by the waves of the tempest; the beak-heads of the ships of Saint Stephen, like diminutive bas-reliefs, decorate the walls; Moorish kettle-drums, corroded anchors, swords covered with rust, form artistic groups on the pilasters; and the whole church, as a glorious illumination, displays in lieu of lamps the lanterns which the galleys of the Knights had carried in the poop royal, beautiful works by unknown carvers, in which the blackened wood resembles delicate filigree.

Seeing such trophies, one can understand why Pisa, in the 16th and 17th centuries, when, sunken into a state of decadence, with her liberty lost, and being nothing more than a fief of the lords of Tuscany, should still have given herself concern over the Turkish marine.

Near the church in the same Piazza dei Cavalieri the remains of the Tower of Hunger can still be seen, that infernal dungeon where Count Ugolino, naked, emaciated, the fever of starvation maddening his brain, destroying his stomach, and beclouding his vision, watched his sons, fallen to their knees, writhing in the agonies of the most terrible of deaths. These Pisans were men of ferocious habit. In a certain class of the citizens the audacious glance and the resolute bearing

of veritable pirates still endures. Being accustomed in former times, as their sole profession, to robbing and to killing on the Mediterranean, and realising that the Turks gave no quarter, the Saracen corsairs, on being taken captive and brought to Pisa, considered that these pirates of the Cross, compared to those of the Crescent, were sucking babes. One need only consider the infernal and unheard-of punishment visited upon their old idol, Count Ugolino and his sons, poor innocent lads, in order to imagine how they treated their slaves.

I came at last to the Piazza del Duomo, and notwithstanding that I had seen it before, the impression of amazement, of artistic rapture, was as great as on the previous afternoon.

The Pisan pirates employed their money to good advantage; they returned from their expeditions to Palermo and the Orient laden with gold, and, with the generosity characteristic of sailors, of men who see death face to face every day, and who scorn riches, realising that they cannot carry them to the tomb, they employed all their booty in building these great edifices which, even to-day, devoid of surrounding trees and gardens, which are the things that dwindle and distort many of our modern monuments, loom up majestically on the extensive meadow.

Half of Carrara was dragged hither in order that the Pisan marine should possess an imposing marble temple wherein to give thanks to God every time it managed to thrust its claws into the savings of Moors or Christians; and all the most notable artists and

architects of Italy passed through this city between the 10th and 18th centuries, where they were splendidly rewarded for their labours.

That these conquerors of Byzantines and Saracens had artistic tastes is revealed in the monuments of Pisa. The cupola of the Baptistery is a veritable Saracen dome, and the Cathedral in its lateral naves, whose arcades are made of stripes of blue and white marble, recall the Mosque of Córdoba.

The remainder of the Cathedral is Byzantine. At the rear of the choir a gigantic Jesus, with narrow beard and Asiatic eyes, as in the paintings of Byzantium, stands out against a gilded background. On the doors, Byzantine saints, angels with narrow chests and scanty vestments, flutter about in a golden atmosphere. The capital of each column is different and, it is supposed, represents a year of work, an entire world swarming about among the masses of foliage. There are doors which depict the entire Bible on their panels, from the paradisiacal creation down to the arrival of the Messiah, in tiny figures, incorrect in their drawing, but so graceful and spontaneous that they seem to be living; and the most precious of the metals glitters on the beams of the ceiling, on the edges of the arches, and drips from every direction, as if flung by the corsairs in handfuls.

The exterior is more simple. The walls are of blue and white bands of marble, and the main façade, with its four galleries of slender columns and its triangular pediment, possesses the appearance of a Grecian temple.

In front stands the rotunda of the Baptistery, with its exterior covered with Gothic lace, tipped by statues, and its interior bare, with no other decorations than the central font and the pulpit, a marvellous work by the great Niccolo Pisano, a large marble bowl with bas-reliefs which are veritable prodigies for the period in which they were done, sustained by seven columns that are a like number of athletes resting their feet on bushy-maned lions.

We pass on to the leaning tower, the monument that gives most fame to Pisa. The guard compelled me to wait for more than an hour. During the past year people have taken a notion to commit suicide by hurling themselves from the top of the tower. It is even said that two foreigners, two bored individuals not lacking originality, made the journey to Italy solely for the purpose of committing suicide in this manner. There are certain reasons for killing oneself here which would not fail to impress perfectly punctilious people. By hurling oneself from the most inclined side, no risk is run of grazing the wall or tearing the clothing on the salient points of the carvings, and, even though one may be gathered up done into an omelet, the correctness of one's clothing is preserved.

For these reasons no arguments avail at the prefecture, and since the outbreak of suicides orders have been given that no one be allowed to make the ascent except in a group of three or more persons.

While I was impatiently waiting for the idea to occur to some of the many English or German brides and grooms who, guide-book in hand, or parasol under

arm, pass through Pisa, I studied the Campanile in all its alarming inclination.

The photographs and engravings give no adequate conception of the strange aspect presented by this tower. It is actually falling; its inclination has reached a critical point; a little more lack of plumb, a slight shake of the earth that would move its foundations, and the gigantic cylinder of marble, with its seven galleries of airy columns, and its massive diadem, from which hang five heavy bells, would lie down upon the grass of the meadow like a drunken colossus tired of sustaining himself on one foot for centuries and centuries. If one looks at it persistently, such is its appearance, it even seems to move and sway like a reed under the impulse of the sirocco which is always blowing with great force at Pisa.

At first sight the stupidity of the universal tradition that creates the impression that the tower of Pisa was intentionally constructed with an inclination by its architect Bonannus in the 12th century is apparent. Architecture, neither then nor now, would play so audaciously with the centre of gravity. It is the ground that has yielded, and the proof is found in the fact that the base of the tower is buried, and in order to enter it one must descend into a foss which surrounds it. The soil of Pisa is very yielding, perhaps because of that continual transformation which causes it to advance into the sea. There is not a single building in all Pisa that actually stands plumb. The broad Arno which crosses the centre of the city, with its seepage softens the soil that has consolidated under

the weight of the tower, although it has had the kindness to remain in the same place where the slender monument began its fall.

The tower is hollow. Due to the thickness of its walls, which measure four and a half meters, the staircase ascends in a gradual spiral, winding around the outer wall of the tower, and the interior is a tube of stone seven meters in diameter, through whose tall opening the blue of space can be seen. Within this well is where the inclination of the tower can best be seen. The ground is an inclined plane. You stand on the higher part resting your back against the wall, and you cannot touch it with your heels, for the body immediately loses its centre of gravity and you fall to the ground. On the other hand, if you lean in the same way on the lower side, the entire body will rest on the back and it will seem as if you are sitting in a swing.

At last appeared the desired auxiliaries, the two who were lacking in order that the Cerberus should grant entrance. It was a young bridal pair, a rich Argentine couple taking their wedding trip through Italy, to whom I did not speak a single word in Spanish, impelled by the pious idea of allowing them without embarrassment to continue calling one another "Darling" and even stronger terms of endearment in the presence of the serious appearance of a foreigner incapable of understanding Spanish, which I assumed.

The staircase which winds up the tower is one of the easiest imaginable, but in spite of this it makes one sea-sick in the end and produces nausea. It creates

the impression of being on shipboard on a stormy day when the surface beneath one's feet changes position every instant. On ascending, the wall inclines as if it were about to crush us as it recedes avoiding our touch, and above, leaning against the circular balustrade, you think you have your hands on the railing of a steamer that inclines, sustaining the weight of the body, or that heaves and hurls it backward.

After beholding the Pisan hills enveloped in fog, and the lowlands, which mingle with the sea, I descended to terra firma, and walking away from "Darling" and "Precious," who entered the Cathedral arm in arm certain that no one understood a word they had been saying, to continue their duo in the presence of the Byzantine saints, I made my way toward the monumental cemetery, the famous Campo Santo.

When Frederick Barbarossa died in the Orient and his crusade proved a failure, the Pisan vessels which had aided the expedition returned with fifty cargoes of earth from Calvary. Perhaps the idea of taking on this ballast occurred to them because the infidel Saladin hurled them back at the point of the scimitar, and they had no more valuable material in which to thrust their claws. But nothing can prevent the thief from being a devotee, and the archbishop of Pisa, Ubaldo de' Lanfranchi, received the gift with enthusiasm, and with the blessed soil made the famous Campo Santo, in which are interred only prelates, prominent persons, and illustrious artists, there being more pictures and statues there than dead.

This cemetery is the real museum of Pisa. The

façade is of marble, as is the whole interior; the arcades reveal the same style as the Cathedral, and the monument is composed of four galleries, illuminated by over sixty Gothic windows, which open above a square courtyard overgrown with grass and wild flowers. A row of statues, of mediæval sarcophagi proceeding from diverse temples, decorate the four cloisters, and the interior walls are covered to the black ceiling by frescoes of the painters of the Florentine school of the 15th century. The sun, the dampness of the walls, and the sticky sea air, have injured these frescoes, which in some places are now nothing but indefinable blotches of colour; but which, in others, represent Biblical scenes with a charming freedom in regard to wearing apparel: Jesus, dressed like a Florentine noble; the apostles in red breeches, mantle, and plumed biretta; the Virgin in a gown with a train and a pouch hanging from her girdle; Saint Joseph, with boots and spurs; the Holy Patriarchs, with crowns of marquises, seated on thrones upheld by clouds surrounded by fluttering angels, which resemble parrots with human heads; but all done in the most correct drawing, brightly coloured, pleasing, cheerful, and beautiful, in harmony with that song into which the Latin world burst when it awoke for the second time, and which is known as the Renaissance; there is the Triumph of Death, with its frightful demons turning over the corpses and taking their souls in the form of pot-bellied children from their mouths, in order to carry them to hell; also The Last Judgment, in which kings and bishops, courtesans and ladies, writhe naked

in the caverns of hell, feeling upon their flesh a tangled skein of green serpents, while, at the opposite extreme, the angels are conducting the poor and humble into the celestial mansion; there, in a word, are all the liberties taken by the artist of past centuries, interpreting religious matters so as to reflect either the spirit of the times, or the protest of the disinherited against the powerful.

If one were compelled to describe all the beautiful things to be seen in cities like those of Italy, he would write a book about each town.

In Pisa historic recollections surge forth at every step. In the Civic Museum, near the sword wielded by the Knights of Saint Stephen at Lepanto, is the sabre of Cialdini, the brave general of Italian independence, destroyer of the Sicilian Bourbons and the irreconcilable enemy of pontifical tyranny.

In a palace near the Arno dwelt that strange and sublime Englishman, Lord Byron. Here he lamented over the death of his fraternal friend, Shelley, and after burning his body in a nearby wood, took the ashes to Rome to give them interment in an ancient urn at the foot of the Pyramid of Cestius.

But all historic recollections pale and vanish upon recalling that, three centuries ago, a man clad in black, with a white beard, tangled hair, eyes of profound expression, and a spacious forehead furrowed by wrinkles of eternal thought, strolled along the banks of the Arno or through the Piazza del Duomo. When not explaining mathematics in the University of Pisa, called the Palace of Wisdom, he spent his time in the Cathe-

dral studying the movements of the Byzantine lamp hanging before the altar from a long cord; or he entertained himself by throwing divers objects down the hollow interior from the height of the leaning tower.

Those mysterious games bore a relation to something concerning the pendulum, to the laws of gravity, and to the movement of the earth, and the Holy Inquisition of Florence, alarmed because of such monstrous tales, sharpened its claws in the dark.

That austere professor of La Sapienza at Pisa was named Galileo.

XVI

THE ETERNAL CITY

I HAVE been in Rome for several hours, but I cannot yet believe that this soil upon which I stand can actually be that of the Eternal City.

During the course of centuries, millions of pilgrims desirous of looking upon the countenance of the highest representative of Jesus on earth, surrounded by the splendours of Oriental pomp, have come here filled with enthusiasm; but I do not concede to these believers that their eagerness was greater than my own to reach this city which, with no other activity than the official stir connected with the Quirinal and the Vatican, with no other industry than the exploitation of the traveller, enveloped in its mantle of ruins, and with twenty-seven centuries of history glowing upon its forehead, still attracts the attention of the world, and cherishes in its bosom, as the last heart-throb of the sovereignty of classic Rome, a mysterious power founded, not on force of arms, but on blindness of faith, and which forces entire nations to bow the head.

The remains of gigantic Babylon lie fallen in the Asiatic desert. Athens, mother of the arts and of civilisation, exists like a galvanised corpse, with no importance except that of being the capital of a minor kingdom. The Bedouin shepherd pastures his flock

above the ruins of Carthage, and his evening fire scorches the foundations of the columns that once heard pronounced the futile death-sentence of the Roman Republic. Egypt is an English factory, a herd of slaves. The Sultan dozes over the ruins of the Byzantine Empire, surrounded by a court of odalisques and executioners. And while all the metropolises of the past lie inanimate, while the winds of centuries have wrested from them the last atom of their greatness, Rome miraculously continues to live, aged, bloodless, but smiling with her senile mouth on seeing that the work of Latin civilisation is still sustained, brilliant and virile. No longer has she legions with which to subject the Iberian, to conquer the Gaul, to enchain the German, and to exterminate the Carthaginian; no longer do armed multitudes pass beneath her triumphal arches, bearing in advance the glorious eagle and the spoils wrested from the conquered peoples. Her power is spiritual, and not warlike. She enslaves souls without enchaining the bodies. She dominates the believers through the splendour of the Pontificate, and she holds the incredulous through the divine attraction of artistic beauty. The poor curate from his remote village, the artist from his studio, the nervous woman whom devotion converts into a visionary, or the writer who breathes from the pages of books that perfume of dried leaves that seems to emanate from the grandeur of the past; all those throughout the world who believe, or who feel without prejudice of nationality or of ideals, in certain moments, on closing their eyes, behold by the light of fantasy a grandiose city, a kind

of promised land, which they desire to visit before death surprises them, and, against a sky tinged the colour of blood, they distinguish the enormous mass of the Colosseum, with its broken windows and its demolished walls; or they see looming through golden vapours the audacious dome of Saint Peter's, around which seems to flutter the spirit of Michelangelo, that Moses of art, who, striking the hard stone with his hand, caused the blind founts of beauty to gush forth.

There is no emotion comparable to that produced by the touch of Rome. One feels in the atmosphere a certain spirit of grandeur; one's muscles seem to stiffen with the steely tension of the gladiator, and the brain seems to become exalted, acquiring greater power; one seems to be enjoying a new Nature inhaling this dust in which were once mingled the ashes of Brutus and Cocles, of the Gracci and of Marius. Over these uncultivated and marshy plains, where to-day pasture herds of buffalo and the shepherds dash about on their ungainly horses like Gauchos of the pampas, Horace and Ovid, Virgil and Tibullus used to stroll in the shadow of murmuring pines, reciting their immortal verses. Here Cicero uttered in solemn tones his unanswerable orations; here the Scipios fortified themselves until the arrival of the moment when the standard of the Roman Senate should cause terror in Spain and in Africa. Over that sea which is drawing away from the port of Ostia, wearied of suffering a glorious servitude, floated the square sails of those triremes laden with soldiers, those soldiers of whom Napoleon said the world would never know their equal,

for they fought on the land with no less valour than they won victories on the waves; and throughout all the extensive Campagna, in the ivy-covered ruins, in what are now poverty-stricken villages that bear famous names, seems to throb the spirit of that nation of legislators and artists, of warriors and orators, so great, so powerful, so universal, that the pride of Saint Paul can well be understood, when, in his hour of torture, he said haughtily to his executioners: "I am a Roman citizen."

No other city can boast the title of immortal as can Rome. Her political power, decayed, pulverised at home by the bacchanal of empire, fell beneath the gallop of the barbarian hordes; but, like those saints who work miracles after their death, even after her ruin she has continued to obsess the mind of the world for fifteen centuries.

This soil is formed of ruins. Like the geologic strata of the earth, various civilisations are interred here and superimposed one above another. It is the tomb of a great people, and the germs of vigour and of glory with which it is saturated have risen to the surface again and again.

It was the cradle of the most famous of Republics, and for this reason during the Middle Ages, when kings were omnipotent and the people were mere flocks of sheep without hope of liberty, a Cencio appeared who knew how to die like the ancient republican heroes; an Arnold of Brescia, ardent apostle of the people, and a Niccolo Rienzi who fell beneath the poniard of the friars, wrapped in the purple of the last tribune.

It was the emporium of art; it uplifted the graceful majesty of Athenian æstheticism in monumental character, and for this reason, after mediæval painting, gilded and vague, after the gross, crudely executed sculpture of the Middle Ages, Michelangelo appeared, resurrecting the classic beauty, the harmonious forms of the ancient world.

She dominated the universe. Her emperors, by a mere sign, threw the world into a state of commotion from the Ganges to the Pillars of Hercules; here that Utopian dream of universal monarchy was a reality for centuries, and for this reason there arose a Gregory VII, as if formed of the ashes of the ancient Cæsars, aggressive, firm, and warlike, who aspired to convert the pontifical tiara into a diadem of earthly empire, and exists to-day the Papacy, which, if it is not the lord over the soil of the nations, possesses power over the souls, and legislates despotically, with no appeal, over many millions of beings scattered over the globe, having as its army the black legions that battle for it both in the European nations and in the interior of America, as well as in the islands of Oceanica, and who send the numerous pilgrimages which, like the ancient army, pass enthusiastically beneath the arcades of Saint Peter's, depositing the rich booty wrested through fanaticism.

O Immortal City! You were destined to be mistress of the world. You changed form with the incessant evolution of history. After the death of your consuls, your legionaries, and your tribunes, you were always conquered; over the unyielding flags of your ancient mil-

itary roads passed the conquering Goths, the German lansquenets, the brilliant French cavalry, the invincible Spanish infantry; Alaric, the Othos, Barbarossa, Don Hugo de Moncada, and the Duke of Alba assaulted your walls; your temples were burned, your palaces were entered and sacked; your women writhed half unconscious in the arms of the drunken soldiery; but that spiritual power, impalpable, which makes you famous and yields you a living at the cost of the whole world, *that* has preserved you, even in the midst of your greatest misfortunes, and it will endure as long as a remnant of humanity scattered throughout the globe gathers in response to the sound of your bells to listen to the hymns which are chanted to your glory in a dead language.

I entered Rome with the desire of seeing all of it at once without a moment's delay; with eagerness to penetrate into the spirit of the great city at one stroke; with veritable hunger in my eyes, as if my hours were counted, and I feared that my dreams might not be realised. I left the minute inspection, the detailed contemplation until later; first must come the deflowering of the unknown, the rapid mass-impression, to be succeeded immediately by another and yet another; the whole city to be seen as in the glow of a lightning flash.

I entered an open carriage and started on a mad race across the city and through the historic Campagna, the monuments, the historic remains succeeding one another before my eyes as if they were pictures from a magic lantern. That lasted for many hours. The

horse trotted along the blue flags of the Roman highways, and the driver sang the wild Romanesque songs alternated with Moorish neighing.

We passed before the harsh ruddy mass of the Castle of Sant' Angelo; I saw the Pantheon, with its gloomy tints; the Forum, surging from the deep excavations, with its portals destitute of columns and its broken colonnades; the palace of the Cæsars surrounded by its gardens on the crest of a hill; the Colosseum with its overwhelming grandeur; the innumerable triumphal arches; the commemorative columns; audacious towers where entwine reliefs depicting a whole epopee of victories; and then came three hours of wild racing over the Via Appia, with Rome becoming enveloped in the final glow of the afternoon at my back, her crystal domes glittering like golden scales. On both sides of the road, shapeless ruins covered by green mantles formed of creeping vines; funeral monuments on whose fronts the shaven heads of the patricians and the Grecian coiffures of the matrons could still be seen.

Sunset found me near the Vatican, in the ward called here the Leonine city, streets inhabited by venders of prints, rosaries, and souvenirs of Rome: they are all a very Catholic people, who never go to mass, and who swear by the Madonna, and always vote for the Catholic candidate, because one must show gratitude, and, as they say with a wink of the eye, they eat from the *sacra bottega,* the name they give to the palace of the Pope.

I spent I know not how long in the Piazza di San Pietro studying the slender colonnades, its monumental

façade, which causes one to lose all sense of proportion, and whose immense size can be realised only when one stands at its foot.

The *poor prisoner* of the Vatican is by no means poorly lodged. A city could be built on the ground it occupies, and never has any king, not even the ancient Cæsars, possessed a dwelling equal to it.

This grandeur it is which stirs and exalts those who come here seeking a glance from the father of the faithful.

Sheltered at the lower end of the monumental marvel is the white-robed old man who seems poor and defenceless, but who still holds within his hands a power that can render European liberty unstable and untranquil.

He possesses no other exterior signs of authority and power than a few Swiss youths dressed as harlequins, who, with glittering Remingtons which are never discharged, mount guard at the door of the palace. But should it occur to this white-robed old man to perturb the world, in the name of religion, as did his predecessors, Ireland would be aroused, Hungary would be stirred with an anti-Semitic campaign, liberals and Catholics would come to blows in Belgium, and the mountains of Maestrazgo and of Navarre would become covered with Basque caps, while the wealth of Saint Peter's would be converted into blunderbusses.

XVII

THE ROMAN FORUM

IN no other part of the Eternal City is the greatness of Rome felt as in the ruins of the Forum.

That sovereign people, which aspired to create a world-wide political union, entrusting first to the Senate of the Republic, and next to the Cæsars, the greatest power the world ever knew, possessed a gift for centralisation. Therefore, when it came to adorning the city with imposing architectural glories, they did not scatter, but massed the structures in a restricted part, and this necessarily was the Forum, the stretch of ground lying around the foot of the Capitolium; the place where the Roman nation was conceived through the association of a band of adventurers; the place where the plebs, ever in perpetual revolt, and never free from exploitation by the patriciate, gathered to deliberate and to vote the laws.

This area, which was the principal scene of Roman glory, is not more than two hundred meters long, but nevertheless no modern city has ever presented such an appearance of artistic splendour as that offered by this civic centre of ancient Rome.

Here were all the great constructions dedicated to worship, to justice, and to the political power of the nation. The Forum being closed about by three hills,

the palaces of necessity rose one above another like carved blocks of marble, topped by roofs of the most variable forms; and at the lower end, on the level tract, above the brilliant columns, the triangular pediments, the colossal statues of bronze and of granite, the bronze vases dedicated to divinities, in which Oriental perfumes ever smoked, rose the Colosseum with its circular mass; and the triumphal arches displayed their laureled medallions, their flowery bowers, their beautiful reliefs, their busts in which the manly beauty of that strong calm race, trained on the field of Mars, is still revealed.

To-day, of all that collection of beauty, of that sublime array of architecture, nothing remains but crumbling ruins. It seems as if an earthquake had passed over the place; as if the furies of Nature had become enraged at the glory of the nation; and yet it is the hand of man, the instinct of destruction in the barbarian invaders, and the still greater rapacity of ignorant rulers, that ruined these works which, because of their solid construction, seemed eternal.

In the Middle Ages the Forum was a gratuitous quarry to which resorted the powerful patricians and the omnipotent Cardinals for the material with which to build their palaces. The carved columns, broken and hacked, served for foundation-stones, and the statues were employed as posts. The reminders of the old pagans must be destroyed. The works of art, in the blindness of the period, were considered nothing more than stupid idols. Then, too, there was no lack of astute priests who, desirous of creating a position

for themselves, and of becoming rulers over something, converted into churches the Roman temples that still remained in a fair state of preservation, ever relentless in the task of destroying and obliterating all signs of the ancient cult.

To-day, five closed, demolished churches, in the interior of which absolutely not a trace of the past remains, are seen in the Forum. Outside, the red granite or blue marble columns lie forsaken, nude, broken, like masts of gigantic stranded ships. Gracefully vaulted ceilings are miraculously sustained upon ruined walls. Grass and weeds creep in between the white flags of the esplanade where the comitia used to be convened; and the marble bas-reliefs, corroded by wind and rain, as if they were of bronze, display their symbolic animals and the most famous scenes of that nation which lived in perpetual strife because of the painful lack of equality between the fabulous riches of a few patrician families and the poverty of the plebeians.

The only thing that remains firm and unaltered, as if it were the heart of that warlike race, is the military road, the pavement of blue blocks which, starting at Rome, crosses the Forum, and formerly extended to the ultimate limits of the known world. An admirable people, born to diffuse its civilisation by means of war, which foresaw and prepared everything necessary for sustaining its dominion! Across the surface of the world of that period, like a blue tree with infinite branches, whose trunk was planted in the Roman Forum, spread the network of military roads, along

which the conquering eagles made their way to every region. The legions who set out from the Forum accompanied by the acclamations of the multitude needed but to make a slight deviation, during their first days of travel, in order to go and fight with the Parthians in Asia, with the Germans along the Rhine, or with those famous Cantabrians and Asturians who, ambushed in the Spanish mountains, covered with skins like wild beasts, died rather than give themselves up to the invader.

A magnificent spectacle was that presented by the Forum during the final days of the Republic. In the background was the Capitolium, lifting against the blue sky its dazzling white temples, its stout walls, the gloomy Tarpeian rock, the cages where growled the wolves kept in recollection of the first founders, or where cackled the geese reminiscent of those which saved the last Roman bulwark from the invasion of the Gauls. Below, the Carcer Mamertinus, with its gloomy dungeons, where political prisoners were let down at the end of a rope, awaiting the hour for being strangled by the bailiffs before their bodies were flung into the Cloaca Maxima; the Temple of Concord, where the Senate held its august sessions; the Tabularium, where the laws of the Republic were kept on great tablets of bronze and rolls of papyrus, the bases of a law that still exists after so many centuries; the School of Xanthus, where congregated the notaries and copyists, functionaries indispensable to that nation of litigants, where even the last citizen was a lawyer; the Temple of Saturn, with its colonnade of red gran-

ite, guarding in its interior the treasure of the Republic, the fabulous riches wrested from barbarian nations; the Temple of Castor and Pollux, recalling on its front the decisive victory of the Romans over the Latins; that of Venus, with its walls of veined and transparent marble, which gave it the appearance of a great shell of nacre; that of Faustina and Antonius, upon a small hill, to which one used to climb by a blue staircase; the triumphal arches; the slender columns with their winged golden statues, sustaining themselves lightly on one foot as if about to take their eternal flight toward Olympus; and at the doors of the monuments, gayly coloured awnings, hoops of bronze covered by crowns of flowers, flaming tripods dispersing heavy perfumes. The austere matron climbed up the steps leading to the temples followed by her slave women; the male slave, with his feet painted white, with bowed and submissive head, thought of his native land far away; the legionary strode past revealing his muscles of iron and his sun-tanned skin through his open cuirass; the patricians, enveloped in white linen, strolled along the galleries of the Temple of Concord, and below, in the Comitium, round about the tribune of the orators, swarmed the plebeians, rebellious, prompt to resort to arms, asking for the division of the lands or for a new distribution of wheat.

One can understand that the Roman should do heroic deeds merely in order to achieve the honour of being received in triumph in this famous Forum.

Through here marched the invincible armies on their return. The vestal virgins, like white and maidenly

phantoms, clad in their floating veils, grouped themselves behind the marble balustrades of the temples. The Roman dames, seated in ivory chairs and fanned by Ethiopian slaves, revealed through opposite extremes of the golden tunic the vigorous, voluptuous neck, with the bosom of pronounced, firm curves, and the feet, on which diamonds and sapphires seemed to grow between their white toes. Down below, on both sides of the stone-paved road, swarmed the plebeians, barely held in check by the minions of the ædiles. The children, naked, rushed about, waving slender branches of laurel on high; the veterans, spare, tanned, their faces furrowed by scars, leaned tremulous with emotion on the arms of the maidens, who concealed beneath their veils the crowns of oak with which they were to adorn the helmet of the soldier, the recollection of which would gladden his hours of solitude. The orator passed through the multitude absorbed in thought, preparing his harangue. Suddenly the blast of war trumpets pealed forth. The victorious army, to which had been conceded the honours of the triumph, was coming! The crowd shouted; a forest of laurel waved above their heads; flowers and crowns fell from the temples, and, through the perfume of the tripods and the blasts of the trumpets, passed the Roman standard, the she-wolf with her muzzle raised above the invincible inscription "S. P. Q. R."; the lictors, bearing their bundles of rods terminated by glittering axes, and among them the hero, the consul, serene and solemn as a demigod, firm as a statue on his muscular steed which whinnied and pranced, all covered with

foam; his round head bound by the garland of laurel, his curling beard resting upon the golden cuirass that defends his broad chest, his vigorous arms and legs uncovered, the ivory sceptre in his hands, and his short sword clanking against the golden scales that cover his thighs. Following the gallant figure of the popular chieftain come the sweating legions, tramping swiftly behind their standards, their swords unsheathed, clasping their shields, the rasping of their iron coats of mail tinkling with a silvery ring; soldiers hardened by war in every clime, their legs bare and their faces calloused by the friction of the cheek pieces of the helmet; and bringing up the rear, the spoils of victory that filled the Roman populace with enthusiasm; the prisoners fettered with their chains, sometimes Germans with red beards and white flesh, with wingèd helmets and coarse pantaloons over which were crossed the leather straps of their sandals; again, Gauls with inflamed eyes and long moustaches, their heads protected with skulls tipped by long horns; Asiatics of yellow hue; colossal Africans, glistening in the sun like ebony; Iberians clad in skins, stoical in their misfortune, and so indomitable that, as they hear the victorious acclamations, they tug at their ligatures and seem as if about to spit in the faces of the Romans; and, finally, interspersed with the chariots groaning under the weight of the booty, pass the elephants swinging their restless trunks; the striped tigers, the thick-maned lions; the heavy bears of the Pyrenees; animals never before seen by the sovereign people, and which arouse in them greater enthusiasm than the richer loot.

O Roman Forum! How many memories do you arouse! How you exalt the imagination!

Nothing remains of the ancient Comitium except the fragments of a pavement which was once trodden by the entire Roman nation. Yet, nevertheless, when the traveler sinks down on one of the steps, late in the afternoon, he seems to hear round about him the lion-like roar of that plebe, that tempestuous sea which beat against the tribune of the orators. He still seems to see the Gracchi firing the crowd with enthusiasm by the promise of a complete social reform, and then, later in the presence of the hostile sword, abandoned by those same persons who acclaimed them. He still seems to hear the roar of fury, the declaration of war to the death of that people swelled with haughtiness and pride on seeing the great vases sent by the fiery defenders of Numantia, filled to the brims with rings, symbols of citizenship that had belonged to the thousands of Romans put to the sword by the indomitable Spaniards.

Nothing remains standing of the Temple of Concord except a few columns resembling beheaded palm trees; but, when night closes in, one fancies he sees the Senate there convened in that final session decisive for the fate of the Republic: the Senators, motionless in their marble chairs, covering their faces with their white mantles, as if the presence of a man of audacious expression and provocative attitude, from whom everyone flees, were repugnant to them, and, facing him, a noble figure that arises with the swift force of civic valour, and in a grave and sonorous voice exclaims

with eloquent amazement: *"Quousque tandem, Catilina?"*

A beautiful place where every stone holds a story and every building a history! This Roman Forum is the matrix where civilisation was formed: all modern nations possess something that emanated from here.

However, that upon which the entire world now looks with profound respect, the Romans, during their centuries of decadence, dared to sack. Had it not been for Raphael and Michelangelo, who protested such vandalism in the name of art, and induced the Pope to order an excavation for the purpose of isolating the Forum, not a stone of it would have remained.

There was a Roman family, that of the Barberini, from which came many cardinals, and even popes, who possessed a masterly hand for constructing palaces by destroying the monuments of antiquity and stealing the marble.

Because of this, a phrase of the artists, who were indignant at this looting, prevailed in Rome: "The havoc not wrought by the barbarians was wrought by the Barberini."

XVIII

THE COLOSSEUM

WHEN the Roman Republic fell, for ever broken by the struggles between Sulla and Marius and the dictatorship of Cæsar, the empire debauched the plebs in order to make sure of its adhesion, flattering it with things that appealed to its grossest sentiments: bread and spectacles.

Cæsarism felt the need of a place where the populace, aroused by sanguinary festivals, should acclaim it, and such clement and pious emperors as Titus and Vespasian constructed the Colosseum, a gigantic arena of four storeys in which eighty-seven thousand spectators could easily be seated.

To-day only a part of the great amphitheatre remains standing, and the rest is in ruins, as if the axe of a colossus had been wielded over it, dividing it into half.

Here also it has been the hand of man that has wrought destruction greater than the years. In the times of Charlemagne, the Colosseum was still intact, like a solid and imperishable work destined to exist for as many centuries as the pyramids of Egypt; but the Romans modified it, making it serve as a defence to withstand the Hadrian Mausoleum, that bulwark of the Popes; and when the pontifical period of great

construction began in Rome, the famous amphitheatre was the exhaustless quarry of red granite into which everyone thrust a hand.

Pope Paul II demolishing arcades, upsetting galleries, and destroying columns and statues, took the materials needed for the construction of the Venetian Palace. Cardinal Riario built the Palace of the Cancelleria with stone from the same source. Paul III followed the same course in building the Farnese Palace, and these holy personages were not lacking in imitators who no doubt called the warriors from the North "barbarians" because, when they invaded Rome, they contented themselves with stabling their horses in the temples.

Impartiality, however, compels one to acknowledge that the tiara has not always been worn by vandals. Influenced by the culture of the period, some pontiffs have taken it upon themselves to redeem the atrocities committed by their predecessors. Benedict XIV, in order to prevent further sacking of the beautiful monument, consecrated it to the Passion of Christ, establishing therein a Calvary in memory of the blood shed upon the sand by the Christian martyrs, and Pius VII and Leo XII made great expenditures for the reinforcement and restoration of the injured building.

It is necessary to-day only to see the Colosseum, dismantled, broken, possessing the lamentable appearance of a ruin, to understand the beauty, the imposing sight, it must have presented during the times of the Empire. Eighty arches gave ingress to the interior, and of these four were reserved: two for the Emperor and

the high functionaries, and the other two for the gladiators with their brilliant retinue. The sturdy arcades of the first storey were sustained by Doric columns, those of the second by Ionic, while those of the third were of the Corinthian order, and the fourth storey, instead of arcades, had great rectangular windows opened through the heavy wall, some of which still remain.

The environs were the most monumental that architecture has produced; the vias paved with that blue granite on which the centuries have left no trace; in front of the main entrances the Meta Sudans, an enormous fountain in whose bowl the gladiators laved their wounds or cooled their reddened skins with the fresh water, cleaning the perspiration from their limbs with ivory scrapers; the statue of the Sun, a colossus of bronze whose diadem of rays almost reached the highest part of the Colosseum, glittering upon its marble pedestal like a mass of gold; the palace of the Cæsars on the nearby hill, immense, overwhelming, with its innumerable piles of buildings, their marble staircases descending to the gardens, and their terraces shaded by purple curtains upheld by golden lances. Idols and statues everywhere: upon the battlements of the imperial dwelling, in every opening in the arcades of the amphitheatre, on the borders of the vias leading into the Colosseum, on the highest of the triumphal arches which break the monotony of the skyline in the distance. Round about the amphitheatre, heated by the sun and by the smell of blood emanating from the soil, swarms the Roman populace. Slaves pass, bend-

ing beneath the weight of the bulging amphora, adorned with tufts of green feathers, heralding the wine of Falernus; a way is opened for the degraded senators, apoplectic, bald-headed, with red and pimply noses, surrounded by their court of freedmen parasites; the multitude shamelessly acclaims the meretrices reclining in the depths of their gilded cars, naked and smiling like mythological dieties, their rosy flesh having no other adornment than gold and pearls, and asphyxiating everyone with their perfumes; the decadent patrician youths enter the circus, the descendants of the Gracchi and the Scipios, who tremble beneath the weight of the cuirass and go about painted and shaven like courtesans, crowned with flowers, covered with jewels, and leaning indolently on the shoulders of Asiatic boys, beautiful Ganymedes, mutilated accomplices of infamous monstrosities.

The multitude swarms along the deep arcades, eager to witness the sanguinary games. Now the most famous gladiators appear, surrounded by their admirers and servants, acclaimed by the populace as if they were kings, and barely replying to the insinuating smiles of the coveted beauties with a gesture of satiation. These are the heroes of imperial Rome. The honours of the triumph which ancient Rome granted to her formidable conquerors are now enjoyed by these jugglers with death. For them has Vespasian raised this great circus, and he inaugurates it with a hundred days of festivity, during which five thousand ferocious beasts die, and the sand is reddened with the blood of three hundred men. Tiberius seats them at his table. Calig-

ula treats them as comrades in his orgies, and Nero aspires to the glory of being like one of them.

The turbulent audience spreads over the immense tier of seats. That is the place for the people; all Rome may enter there, with the exception of the slave. Like a living mosaic, the scarlet cap of the freedman moves close beside the helmet of the prætorian; the red mantle of the matron beside the white tunic of the maiden, and the patched frock of the Jew. Aloft, on the very edge of the building, toil the sweating sailors of the imperial fleet, tugging at ropes and pulleys in order to stretch the immense purple awning for giving shade to the arena. Smoke curls in perfumed spirals from the alabaster vases along the marble balustrade that surrounds and isolates the sanguinary ring, and every time the roar of a lion or the hair-raising scream of a tiger is heard in the distance, as if issuing from the bowels of the earth, the populace applauds and laughs, possessed by childish enthusiasm.

Below, round about the lists, in the envied position, where the gurgling of blood and the horrifying gesture of agony can best be seen, are the tribunes of the privileged. There the vestal virgins, like white phantoms, only become animated and lose their rigid immobility when they extend their beautiful arms beyond their mantles, asking for the death of the vanquished; there are the Senators, still tired from the latest discussion concerning the honours merited by the imperial horse, or what the Cæsar should eat on the following day. The silver trumpets sound, the multitude bursts into acclamation, and, crowned with gold and laurel

like a god, trailing his red mantle, the Emperor enters, indifferent to the public tribute, flaccid and debilitated by soft living, painted and adorned like a harlot, indefinable as a hermaphrodite, his bleary eyes wandering over the pleasing retinue that surrounds him: beauties from every country, who leave their pearly nudity revealed through their open tunics, upon whom he gazes with satiety; and vigorous young giants with strong muscles, ugly as satyrs, upon whom he smiles like a virgin with repugnant shamefacedness.

The populace continues acclaiming the demigod Cæsar, who bears the cost of the festival, until he takes his seat in the Pulvinar, the raised marble throne, and at a sign from him the gladiators make their appearance and the circus *en masse* bursts forth into a roar of enthusiasm.

The men look upon them with envy, the women with covetousness; they all admire the slenderness of those half nude forms, with their erect limbs, and the weapons borne by each one according to his particular mastery: some with the steel helmet drawn down to their shoulders, the breast uncovered, and the broad knife held in the right hand; others grasping the sharp-pointed trident and having no other defence than the net, with which they overthrow and drag their opponents.

Standing in a row before the imperial tribune, they salute the Emperor with solemn arrogance before dying, and the combat begins. Men who do not hate one another, who but a few moments before were drinking fraternally together like good comrades, pursue one

another now, or avoid each other as mortal enemies. They exchange glances, calculating the shock before the critical moment. He with the net looks for the opportune moment to overthrow his adversary, who approaches cautiously in order to bring him within reach of his sword. The multitude grows impatient and begins to shout until at last the net whirls through the air with a penetrating hiss without enveloping the armed gladiator, and the latter pursues his opponent, who, on finding himself defenceless, dashes swiftly across the arena, feeling death close at his back. Now the one with the sword has caught up with him; he throws him, places his foot upon his chest, and with a glimmer of the old-time friendship, appeals to the audience with a glance, wishing to spare the fallen man.

The multitude roars with anger. It has come to be diverted, to see blood flow, and eighty thousand arms are extended rigid, with fists closed, and thumbs down. "To the death! To the death!" And the knife sinks into the chest of the vanquished, the blood dyes the sand, and the quivering body is dragged by slaves toward the Spoliarium, where the human flesh of the destroyed is heaped into a pile.

Thus the festival of the Roman people continues: witnessing some collapse with their chests opened by the sword, or others lying kicking on the sand, pierced by the sharp points of the trident. The women inhale the stench of blood with enjoyment, while the degenerate patricians who surround the Pulvinar familiarise themselves with death, and prepare to open their veins at the slightest display of imperial annoyance.

The gladiators retire; the wild beasts growl in their lairs, hungry, and inflamed by the vapours of blood that float toward them, while into the arena enter rosaries of prisoners, of fierce barbarians, to whom is given for sole defence a weak dart with which to battle with the wild beast.

On seeing their strange garb the infamous audience laughs. Making their way up the incline leading from the subterranean dungeons, the beasts leap into the arena, their tails lashing, their jaws open, their growls thundering through space, and for some time nothing can be seen within the fatal enclosure except masses of flesh and strands of red hair that roll over the sand; arms that are raised in order to strike a blow with the strength of desperation, and which fall dissevered; blood trickling in streams; legs that are being torn from the body; and during intervals of silence on the part of the multitude is heard the rattle from the throat of the dying, the cracking of crunched bones, the fierce grinding of teeth.

The best, that which makes the bellies of the Senators and the breasts of the matrons ripple with waves of laughter, is yet to come: the death of those strange beings caught a few nights before in the ancient quarries of Rome; mysterious people who worship an unknown Jew, sacrificed there in his country as if he were a thief; who dwell in fraternal community, and conceal themselves in the bowels of the earth in order to entone their canticles, and who pretend that all human beings are equal in the sight of God.

Accompanied by the whistling of the rabble, driven

by the clubs of slaves, the enemies of social order enter the arena, the anarchists of the period, victims of the blind fury of the vulgar, old men with white, luminous beards; youthful neophytes, subjected to monstrous insults before being led to their death; pallid maidens with dreamy eyes, paraded naked through the lupanars of Rome without losing their moral purity as virgins; arrogant matrons who had turned their backs upon Roman corruption, attracted by the fire of the new faith; old soldiers who see in the nascent religion the remedy for the Cæsarian tyranny and for the great social inequalities.

No; do not expect them to defend themselves. These will not entertain you as did the barbarians with the desperation of a being that resists. Sunk to their knees, in a close-packed group, they extend their arms on high and send forth in a soft chorus those same songs which floated mysteriously through the interior of the catacombs. The lion shakes his mane and falls back a step, as if amazed by the quietude of this new food; the panther swings round in suspicion, winking his emerald eyes as if soothed by the sweet songs and bedazzled by the nimbus of gold that the declining afternoon sun, filtering through one end of the awning, casts over the heads of the Christian group; until at last the bestial instinct triumphs; the sharp claws drag down those who are praying, and each victim, upon realising that his life is escaping through the rents in his flesh, believes that, with his blood-dimmed eyes, he can see the heavens opening and an interminable chain of angels coming out to meet him.

"Let your God save you!" the filthy horde shouts, between outbursts of laughter, intoxicated by blood.

No; their God cannot save them. No one saved Him when He was dying on Golgotha, the victim of another multitude debased by tyranny. But something remains that shall avenge them: that mysterious power that causes every persecuted idea to triumph, that converts Utopias into realities, and that builds above the corpse of the martyr the religious or the revolutionary future.

Alas for the nations that stifle ideals in blood!

Rome, intoxicated by the red streams in the Colosseum, and by the feminine perfume of her Cæsars, never believed that some day the successors of the Christian martyr would overthrow her beautiful idols, her great works of art, with the blind hammer of fanaticism. Never could she imagine that the grandchildren of the poor barbarians who served them as a diversion through being devoured by wild beasts would appear before her gates setting fire to the city and bringing death in a conquering invasion, trampling under their swift steeds the last vestige of Roman domination.

XIX

RAPHAEL AND MICHELANGELO

THE Vatican is the greatest of all the palaces in the world. Thousands of rooms, hundreds of staircases, ten great courts, immense gardens wherein are woods and parterres, with broad avenues along which wind carriages, and with irregular hills in whose mysterious shadows the noises of the city never penetrate, all together occupy an expanse of ground in which the capital of a province could easily be accomodated.

Ever since the 14th century the popes have devoted their immense riches and the great resources of this land of art to embellishing the dwelling of the person who represents on earth the God of the poor and the unfortunate, who had a stone for a pillow, and for a palace the luminous vault of heaven.

Each of the most famous popes contributed with some great work to the completion of these beautiful buildings which are equivalent to a veritable city. Sixtus IV created the famous Sistine chapel and the library; Alexander VI, our compatriot Rodrigo de Borgia, ordered the erection of the Loggie decorated by Raphael, and finished the covered passage that joins the Vatican to the Castle of Sant' Angelo, which has so often served the pontiffs as an avenue of escape;

Julius II ordered the architect Bramante to construct the Court of Saint Damasus; Paul III finished the Sala Regia, the Pauline Chapel, and the Sala Ducale; Gregory XIII added the imposing Torre dei Venti and founded the gallery of geographical charts; and thus all his successors, in greater or less degree, have done something that their names shall be linked with the glory of this architectural marvel.

One enters the Vatican passing between the Swiss Guards, youths of brave appearance (wearing helmets on Sundays and velvet tam-o'-shanters on other days) who conceal their gaudy uniforms of striped silk beneath a broad loose cape cut somewhat like a cassock. They are the "heroes" of Mentana; those who fled in pious resignation before the bayonets of Garibaldi, but who, aided by the troops of Napoleon III, had the modesty to arrogate the victory to themselves. The holy office of sergeant passes from father to son, and for the modest Swiss shepherd reared in the privation and poverty of the mountains, it is a veritable joy to come to Rome, where he fattens like a canon, dressed in silk, with no other occupation than to clean a gun that is never discharged and to doze away his time on guard-duty, or on the cool galleries, with the hope of finally thrusting his head into heaven as a virgin warrior of the Church.

Scarcely does the visitor find himself in this immense city of marble, climbing the broad staircases, walking through the silent galleries, and looking at Rome through the crystalled windows, than his first and most vehement desire is to enter into the presence of those

geniuses who still seem to fill the Vatican with their expansive spirit, and who are the ones that animate the dead palace, those who cause an interminable rosary of illustrious travellers to defile through its halls.

There, in all their splendour, are Raphael and Michelangelo; there, in their vigour, still live those colossi of art who made the splendour of antiquity turn pale, and who still have found none to surpass them. Thinking of them, the Vatican may be considered the greatest of museums, and one forgets that above these vaulted ceilings are the apartments where strolls a white-robed old man, whom many salute in a quadrupedal position, kissing his toe; that privileged being of undeniable capability, "a man of more intellect than sentiment," as Zola said in his last novel; he who bestirs himself futilely to couple the past with the future, and, in order to attract the attention of the working classes, who are everywhere turning their backs upon the Church, deals with the social question timidly and evasively like a diplomat, fearing to antagonise some by pleasing others.

As long as the world exists even the school-children will know that there lived some pontiffs of art named Raphael and Michelangelo, whose infallibility is in their works. On the other hand, who to-day remembers Pius VII and Pius VIII, Leo XII, or Gregory XVI, popes who wore the tiara in this same century?

In the famous Loggie of the Vatican, a series of small saloons, illuminated by rounded windows, which occupy an entire face of the wall, is where the prodigious art of Raphael glows in all its splendour.

Many years have caressed the beautiful frescoes with their blackening hand. The soldiery of Charles V slept and cooked their mess in these marvellous rooms, begriming the brilliant colours with the steam from their flesh-pots; nevertheless Raphael still is there, he of the fresh and rosy skin, beneath which the blood flows and life pulsates; he of the arrogant and beautiful figures, which are the quintessence of human beauty; he of the harmonious groups, he who knew how to interpret life with sweetness and supernatural ingenuity.

There, occupying a whole wall, is the *Incendio del Borgo,* with the pathetic group formed by the son carrying his sick father through the flames on his back; the women running half nude; the men who have been surprised naked in their sleep hurling themselves from the flame-spouting windows; the boy who, a bundle of clothing under his arm, contemplates the catastrophe with stupefaction; an entire multitude, whose terror is expressed with such naturalness, with such true art, that the painting seems to assume life, and one even seems to hear the crackling of the burning buildings. After this famous work come others and yet others, covering the walls of the Loggie, converting them into hampers wherein are packed the colours and perfumes of the springtime of art. Some of the paintings were completed directly by Raphael; others were conscientiously finished by his pupils, after the untimely death of the master, according to his original drawings; coronation scenes in which the popes stand out haughty and dominant, having kings at their feet; allegories of the arts;

battles won by the favourite chieftains of the Pontificate; great theological disputes between princes of the Church; brilliant Renaissance fantasies, in which pagan Olympus, naked and smiling, is mingled with saintly Christian austerity; the celebrated painting *Parnassus*, where, crowned with laurel, and with luminous brows, all the great poets of Greece, together with those belonging to the epoch of the painter, appear round about Apollo. *The School of Athens*, where the immortal philosophers are so clearly reproduced in their ideas, in their character and bearing, that one recognises them instantly; and mystic scenes in which the Virgin appears surrounded by luminous splendours, ever the identical face, that of "La Fornarina," that Roman woman whose half nude portrait can still be seen, done by Giulio Romano, Raphael's favourite pupil; a baker woman, strong and vigorous, with an oval face and a hard expression, narrow of chest, stout of limb, with the well-developed biceps of the woman accustomed to carrying sacks of flour; a tireless Amazon, who with her lioness-like caresses squeezed out the little remaining life of that sublime consumptive, who was as beautiful as a maiden.

After the Loggie, the Sistine Chapel; after Raphael, Michelangelo; and the spirit undergoes the same brusque change that it suffers when, at a concert, after the sweet and tender melodies of Bellini, the tempestuous inspiration of Wagner thunders forth.

One is startled by the greatness of the work created by the brush of that Florentine genius, who was ugly to the point of sublimity, bearded like the biblical

prophets, and possessed of a forehead that, in its continual waves of frowns, conceived a whole world of new ideas.

Nothing withstood his onslaughts. A Samson of art, he pounded open the doors of all the arts he desired to dominate. For him there were no apprenticeships or initiations. One day the great Medici, strolling through his smiling gardens in Florence, stopped, dumb with amazement, before a ten-year-old urchin with an insolent expression, who was sculpturing a figure with the ease and skill of a master. It was Michelangelo, the same who, years afterward, having been forced to become an architect, erected the basilica of Saint Peter's. He decided to turn poet, and he addressed to his beloved ideal, Vittoria Colonna, the wife of Pescara, the conqueror of Pavia, impassioned sonnets in which Petrarch lived again. Of a sudden he wished to be a painter in order to confound his enemies, and without the slightest preparation in the mysteries of colouring, he took upon himself the decoration of the Sistine Chapel, tracing that *Last Judgment* which arouses in the spirit the terror of an appalling *Miserere.* As a young man he had an obsession for anatomy; he purchased corpses from the gravediggers of Florence in exchange for small statues, and in his dilapidated studio, by the light of a tallow dip which he fixed in the navel, he would spend the night bending over the cold bodies, dissecting them in order that his eagle eyes might trace the conjunction of the muscles, the rigidity of the tendons, all that internal mechanism which is revealed with such an appearance

of life beneath the polished surface of the marble in the group *Solitude,* which is the best thing in the Vatican, or in the famous *Moses,* which the artist felt over with his hand, asking him in wonder: "Why do you not speak?"

Brusque to the point of being terrible, ever becoming more and more submerged in misanthropic isolation, haughty with the powerful, and scornful with his enemies, he was kind and affectionate only with Raphael. The indisputable glory of Raphael, his great triumphs, recognised by everyone, did not arouse his envy. He understood the situation, and he accepted it; the two formed the marriage of art. He who was born at Urbino was the female filled with grace and poesy, whom everyone loved, attracted by his personal charm; the other was the male, born to fight, to create enemies for himself who were terrified by his forcefulness, to attempt the great, the novel.

His opponents, setting a trap for his defeat, arranged matters so that the sculptor, the architect, the anatomist, should take charge of the painting of the Sistine Chapel. That was at once Michelangelo's most gloomy and most glorious period. Obsessed by the apocalyptic glory of the *Last Judgment* which he wished to portray on the walls of the chapel, he sought inspiration in death. Every afternoon, with a copy of Dante under his arm, he would wander along the Via Appia, he would fling himself down at the foot of the Roman mausoleums, breathing the atmosphere impregnated with the dust of the tombs, and in the fantastic light of the setting sun, he would read and

reread his compatriot the Florentine bard, impregnating himself with the horror emanating from the gloomy verses which describe the condemned, howling in the vapoury circles of Inferno.

Isolated from the world, distrustful of his genius and of the greatness of his work, the artist was attracted toward death. One day, while springing about the ruins, he broke a leg, and he shut himself up in his house with the determination of allowing himself to die. The doctors and his admirers were compelled to enter through a balcony, and they were received almost with gunshots.

Twenty-two months were employed in painting the ceiling and the lower part of the vaulting of the Sistine Chapel, and all this time he carried the key in his pocket, allowing no one to enter to inspect the progress of his work. On one occasion the Pope forced the door and he was filled with ecstasy, seeing Michelangelo high up on the scaffolding under the ceiling, painting his famous Sibyls and all the legions of Prophets who announced the birth of Christ.

The ill-humoured artist, when he became aware of this espionage, picked up a board and, without saying a word, flung it at the intruder with such good aim that it grazed the pontifical pate, and came near parting it in the middle; but the Pope, who also had a bad disposition, and was, moreover, a man of vigour, made his way to the scaffolding to see the work at close range. Michelangelo, snorting with rage at seeing himself disobeyed, tried to cover the Pontiff's eyes with his hand, and the result was that the artist and the Pope

came to blows up there on the crazy scaffolding, but some time later, after the paralysis of the work that lasted several weeks, they became excellent friends.

The figures on the ceiling are marvellously beautiful, but it is the *Last Judgment* which attracts particular attention, producing an indescribable impression. The horror of Dante is there in material form on the wall, producing a chill with its gloomy sublimity. Jesus, ireful, as the implacable Judge; the Virgin, weeping and overcome with terror, nestling close on bended knees; John the Precursor, with his right hand outstretched, hurling frightful malediction upon the reprobates, and with his left inviting the elect to enter into heaven; a group of angels on high, holding up the instruments of the Passion; seven archangels, supporting the voluminous Book of Judgment with their backs, are blowing furiously upon long trumpets, awakening the dead, who burst open their sepulchres; round about the celestial throne, the patriarchs and the prophets, the apostles and the confessors, the martyrs and the virgins, displaying the implements of their torture; Saint Andrew with the cross on his back; Saint Bartholomew stripped of his skin, carrying it entire, slung over his arm; Saint Laurence bristling with arrows; and, farther down, the sepulchres which are bursting, and the yellow-hued dead surging forth, assisting each other to shake off the mantle of earth; the elect, who ascend in an interminable chain toward Paradise; the condemned, who fall like a torrent of limbs, entangled in the network of green serpents, impelled by fierce blows from the infernal spirits; the gloomy Stygian

lake with Charon's bark drawn up to the shore, landing the dolorous procession of souls exiled for ever, and the ferocious boatman, his beard fluttering in the wind, his eyes flaming, and his oar held aloft, beating and kicking those who resist leaving the boat, just as they are described by Dante:

"Batte col remo qualunque s' adagia."

There is such truth, such life, in the terrifying painting, that it even seems as if Charon is about to strike the observer with his oar, and one experiences an involuntary impulse to step back so that the string of bodies, of vigorous legs, of muscular arms, of athletic chests, rolling down from on high to become submerged in the infernal abyss, shall not fall upon him. Never has the human form found greater glorification than in the Sistine Chapel. Here are nude figures by the hundreds, revealing a prodigious richness of muscular development, each one in a different attitude, and nevertheless all of them in natural postures, without the slightest distortion.

Michelangelo painted the figures nude, because the nude was the taste of the Renaissance; and moreover because, as he so truly said, souls have no tailor to dress them.

Jesus and the Virgin, male and female saints, the blessed and the accursed, originally appeared in the picture revealing the distinctives of sex.

The cardinals complained, and especially the master of ceremonies Biagio da Cesena, alleging the indecency of having such a picture in a chapel, and Paul III, in view of the flat refusal of the painter to change it, had

one of his pupils trace veils which floated through the painting, covering the parts that were offensive.

But Michelangelo avenged himself. In the *Last Judgment*, at the extreme right, stands a condemned man with a great nose, heavy white hair, and a priestly air, who attracts attention because of his two enormous asses' ears, and a serpent that, issuing from the flames, twines itself about his body and lacerates his chest.

The prelate, terrified at finding himself in hell, appealed to the Pope, begging him with lamentations and sighs to order Signor Michelangelo to paint out his caricature from the terrible picture. But Paul III, the brother-in-law of Julia Farnese, being a man who appreciated a jest, replied in all seriousness:

"My dear son, if the painter had put you in purgatory I could have gotten you out, for my power extends that far; but you are in hell and it is impossible; *nulla est redemptio.*"

And the unlucky Biagio da Cesena, with his asses' ears and the great serpent twined about his body, is still there, no doubt cursing the hour in which the thought of dressing up the celestial court occurred to him.

XX

SAINT PETER'S

ON entering the Piazza di San Pietro for the first time and looking at the greatest temple of Christendom, the observer receives the impression that the whole mountain of stone is about to fall suddenly upon his spirit with crushing force.

It does not stir one to tender emotion as do the Gothic temples with their vapoury and idealistic architecture, but it astounds with its overwhelming sense of vastness.

The great square, with its gigantic colonnades, its monumental fountains, its audacious obelisk that rises and rises as if about to rend the clouds, and the façade, which cannot be taken in with a single glance but must be studied in sections, immediately brings to mind the immense power enjoyed by the popes, the exhaustless resources yielded them through the faith, in order to be able to achieve so astounding a marvel.

These popes of the 16th century, who dwelt in Oriental pomp, with poets and artists for companions in their anacreontic feasts, still had two hundred and fifty millions of pesetas (fifty million dollars) left to spend on the construction of a temple so gigantic as to amaze the faithful.

Julius II, the artist pope, wished to have his earthly

remains enclosed in the depths of a monument as great and enduring as the Pyramids, and, thanks to him, there arose the present basilica of Saint Peter's, upon a church where in former centuries Charlemagne received the imperial diadem from the hands of the pontiff, and the Cæsars of Gaul and of Germany came to be anointed with humiliating ceremonies that augmented the power of the pontificate.

The initiators of this gigantic temple employed a firm hand to extort the money from the people. They issued indulgences like superabundant currency which is exchanged at a discount; the Dominicans went from town to town with the devices of jugglers, hawking about pardon for sins at a fixed price. In Germany Father Tetzel set up his tent impartially in any town whatsoever, giving absolution for everything in order to send money to Rome; and so great was the scandal that it served an obscure Augustine monk named Martin Luther as a basis for protest against such unseemly traffic, which immediately brought all the nations of the north to his side.

The wonderful temple was built with the money of the faithful, but in exchange for such a marvel the papacy lost half of Europe.

The basilica of Saint Peter's is the work of several generations. During its construction plans and architects were changed innumerable times, but notwithstanding so many variations, the regularity and harmony of its general lines constitute one of its most noteworthy merits.

Bramante was the actual architect, but after him

Giuliano and Antonio da Sangallo, Fra Giocondo, Raphael, and Baldassare Peruzzi intervened in the construction, with greater or less success, until finally, after the death of Raphael, they called in Michelangelo, who accepted the commission only after having refused many times. Due to his influence the church was finished according to the plans of Bramante, carrying out the design of the gigantic dome, which, with perfect justice, is called the "triumph of architectural beauty."

Like a barely perceptible ant, the visitor ascends the immense staircase; he traverses the arcades beneath which many of our churches easily could be passed, and he enters the temple.

It takes time for the eyes to realise the vastness of the basilica. The dimensions are so well calculated, the lines are so thoroughly in proportion, the relation between the length and the height is so correct, that, on entering, one stops at the door, thinking that he sees before his eyes a cathedral like any other, and that what he has heard about its size is impassioned exaggeration.

Only when the observer notices that the marble angels sustaining the holy water founts, which, seen from the door, seem of ordinary size, grow and grow as he approaches until they become converted into colossi of marble; only when one walks and walks in order to pass from one side of the arcade to the other, and when one sees that each pilaster, which at first sight seemed to be slender, occupies as much ground as a house, and his glance rises and rises along the

length of the columns until it reaches the vaulting, does he understand the famous basilica of Saint Peter's, and the exclamation "How enormous!" is inevitable.

Enormous: that is the word; enormous and beautiful, but nothing more. The simple souls who are impressed by the sumptuousness of worship; that interminable procession that has left the statue of Saint Peter lamed by reason of so much kissing of his foot, notwithstanding the fact that it is of bronze, may be thrilled and may weep with emotion at the one hundred golden lamps burning around the sepulchre of the first pope; at the startling, overwhelming sumptuousness of the basilica; but the artistic observer could better experience the indefinable spirit of Christianity, its vague mysticism, in the dim light of a Gothic cathedral, or in the humble stillness of a village church.

This is a pagan temple. In its splendour temporal power is revealed, the character of the constructors who were earthly kings rather than guardians of the keys of heaven, and wished to dazzle the world, surpassing all other sovereigns in ostentation. One sees also the smiling Renaissance fleeing from the gloomy dreams of the Middle Ages; sees Michelangelo and Raphael, who should have been contemporaries of Pericles, but, since their birth was retarded twenty centuries, they revived the beauty of the ancient world.

In Saint Peter's one greets Julius II and Leo X, merry Anacreons who disseminate the noise and brilliancy of festivity through the chronicles of the papacy, and Michelangelo, the irreverent genius who, forgetting conventions, and thinking only of nature and of

art, painted Jesus, the Virgin, and the whole celestial court, naked.

The light streams in through the windows of the colossal basilica, as if it were a Grecian temple. The marble seems to laugh, revealing its dazzling whiteness; the gold glitters on the altars and in the flutings of the columns, on the flowery capitals and on the vaulted ceilings; the stucco trembles, reflecting the rainbow-colours on its gilded surface; the bronze glows in winding spirals; the mosaic shines with tints that seem to possess life, and the sunlight penetrating through the windows spreads fluttering gilded tapestries over the rich porphyry pavement. In the naves rise the carved masses of the mausoleums of the popes, with ferocious lions dozing upon the marble blocks, Roman warriors, with their swords under their arms, guarding the eternal sleep of the pontiffs, angels that almost disappear from sight between their widespread wings, and nude figures, revealing the human form with perfect frankness, as if, instead of being sheltered beneath the ceilings of the greatest temple of austere Christianity, they were standing between the colonnades of the Parthenon.

Near the high altar is the tomb of Paul III, that Farnese who demolished the great works of ancient Rome in order to build a palace for his family.

The Pope, with the forehead of a lion and the beard of a Moses, appears seated upon a gigantic monument, the work of Guglielmo della Porta. His gaze is fastened upon a gloriously beautiful woman lying at his feet, who, according to the artist, represents Justice,

although his contemporaries stubbornly pretended to see in her Julia Farnese, the sister-in-law of the Pontiff, famous as the greatest beauty of Rome.

And she it was; this can be affirmed without hesitation, unless the artist's chisel flattered. The devotees who made pilgrimages to the church of Saint Peter in the 16th century must have greatly enjoyed seeing that marble beauty who is raising her handsome head toward the Pope, while at the base of the monument rests her adorable form. Donna Julia was a fine mouthful for a pope, and no doubt, in order to prevent others, even to the very acolytes, from dreaming of wearing the tiara, stimulated by the desire of having such beautiful sisters-in-law, the successors of Paul III had the statue covered as far as the knees with a sheet of white metal having the form of a chemise. The remedy has proved to be a failure, for the folds outline and reveal the charms within, and it is a well-known fact that beauty revealed through veils is more effective than absolute nudity.

After appreciating the size and the beautiful ensemble of this temple, the next thing is to ascend a spiral incline leading to the dome, a mountain of lead three hundred and twenty-five feet high by six hundred and fifty in circumference.

From the interior of the sphere which serves as a base for the cross on top, one contemplates all Rome, which resembles a torrent of red roofs, marble battlements, and slender towers, and which seems to be flowing and winding as if boxed in between hills. The pine forest extends like gloomy waves over the undula-

tions of the ground; the masses of ruins recall the great dead city. In the background one sees broken aqueducts, crumbling towers, sepulchral pyramids, and the turbid Tiber making its way toward the sea, writhing and contracting its red back.

Round about the great dome upon the roof of the church exists a veritable town, with its houses, its little shops, its walks and its fountains. There live the innumerable employes and operatives of the church, people who inherit the position from father to son, and who spend whole months without going down to the city, where they are known from of old by the name of "Sampetrinos" or Saint Peterites.

Advancing along the back of the great marvel, one comes to the front of the church, to the final balustrade, adorned with the statues of the Twelve Apostles. These are so tall, so enormous, that, seen close at hand, they cause terror, and more resemble enormous blocks fantastically carved by nature than works of human art. Yet, nevertheless, so great is the height of the building that, from below, standing in the Piazza, they seem to be of natural size, sculptured with great delicacy and detail.

These astounding statues inspired the most profound and sincere phrase ever spoken by a pope.

One day Benedict XIV, a virtuous pope and great of spirit, received a copy of the tragedy *Zaire,* sent him by Voltaire, the dreaded unbeliever.

The cardinals and familiars were marvelling at this attention from the famous sceptic, and Benedict, smiling sadly, said, to the amazement of them all:

"Here you see wherein we resemble those statues that crown the façade of Saint Peter's. Seen from a distance we seem beautiful and magnificent, but seen at close range we inspire horror."

XXI

BEAUTIES OF THE VATICAN

IN order to realise the immense power enjoyed by the pontificate, it suffices to see its museums.

Everything of note which has been produced by the arts throughout the most famous nations is to be found there, either donated as gifts from the faithful, or acquired with the immense treasure which the old-time popes had at their disposal.

In the vast saloons, with their ceilings decorated by the artists of the Renaissance, and their floors paved with that tiny mosaic that reproduces scenes from life with the same relief as in a painting, the history of art is revealed, with a richness and profusion not to be equalled elsewhere.

There is the Etruscan museum, with its reliefs reproducing mythologic scenes, or showy sacrifices to the gods; red amphoræ, with their black figures, correct in drawing, of warriors who are fighting fiercely, their lances on high and their shields before their breasts, or slender maidens with tunics in stiff folds, having water-jars balanced on their heads. There is the Egyptian museum, with its mummy cases of screaming colours, where swarms a whole fantastic world of gods with heads of cats and animated lotus flowers;

mummies cruelly enwrapped; idols of basalt, resembling squatting frogs; sphinxes, their serene countenances framed by the sacred toga; Pharaohs, across whose forehead crawls the royal viper; and the hieroglyphic inscriptions, by means of which modern historical science is deciphering the secrets of a mysterious people. And there, finally, is the Christian museum, representing the simple and ingenuous art that developed in the interior of the catacombs, where existed persecution and martyrdom; the sheets of ivory whereon are copied with crudeness, but with animated line, the torments of those who were dying for the faith; the tablets on which appeared the first bishops presiding over the mystic assemblages of the faithful, who intone a hymn to the Crucified One, hearing perhaps the footsteps of the Cæsarean bailiffs at their backs; and the sepulchral inscriptions of that nation of troglodytes animated by the purest ideals, in which, as one author says, there is no grammar but a tenderness that is pathetic.

The most notable museum of those within the Vatican is that of sculpture.

All the works of art which have been found during eight centuries of excavation in the Colosseum, the Forum, the Pantheon, the Thermæ, and the Via Appia, are there, with innumerable marbles discovered in ruins all over Italy.

Michelangelo, who astounds because of his activity even more than because of his genius, was the organiser of this museum. It seems incredible that one lifetime should have been sufficient for the realisation

of so many prodigious undertakings. Directing the building of Saint Peter's, painting the Sistine Chapel, carving its immortal statues, he still found time to mock at the iconoclastic mania of the centuries, and, lovingly studying the great works of antiquity that emerged from the depths of the fields and from the foundations of the ruins, he remedied their imperfections, filled out their broken members, rounded the shattered heads, reunited the separated groups, carried on his work of restoration with such art, penetrating the inspiration of the ancient sculptors in such a manner, that it is almost impossible to distinguish the original from the part restored. Phidias and Praxiteles must have smiled beneath the dust of centuries on seeing how, with the disinterestedness of genius, the brusque, ill-humoured artist neglected his own works in order to resurrect the glory of Greece.

All the modern part of the Vatican is occupied by this museum. The visitor becomes lost in the immense saloons, he becomes disoriented and confused among the extensive galleries, the graceful rotundas, the imposing staircases, the courts where fountains murmur, the caryatides covered with moss and flowers overhanging from the green jardinières; the terraces along whose balustrades the trees in the gardens of the Vatican wave their ancient foliage; and ever along the length of the walls, in the depths of the niches, on the tablets which reproduce the smile of the satyr, in the centre of the rounded chambers, marble and more marble polished by the centuries, with a faint tinge of amber, caressed by a thousand chisels, in order to as-

sume the form of the bust immortalising some philosopher, warrior, or Cæsar; to copy the beauty of the mythologic divinities, or to express the charming legends of the past in an animated group; an incorporate hymn of innumerable strophes that seems to sing without words the divine beauty of the human form.

There are all the sages of Greece, from the polished Alcibiades to the Bohemian Diogenes; there Pericles and Themistocles, with bearded face peeping from beneath the pointed visor of the tall Grecian casque; the heroes and the conquerors of the Roman Republic, lifting their round heads, their aquiline noses, and their fiery brows above the folds of the virile toga; the deified Cæsars revealing in their blunted features the ravages wrought by vice; imperial senators, swollen, apoplectic, with necks like bulls and triple chins, as if they were still digesting the greasy lampreys nourished on the flesh of slaves; the old-time actors, covered with the hideous mask of the primitive theatre; Homer, holding on his knees the heavy lyre formed by a shell and two horns, his sightless eyes fixed on the infinite; Sophocles, with his vigorous face beside that of the emaciated Virgil; Euripides and Pindar with Horace; Anacreon, crowned with vine leaves, his lyre at his feet, lovingly contemplating the close-packed bunch of grapes; Aspasia, her serene goddess-like profile grazing against Cleopatra, whose features seem to be contracting with the final spasms of voluptuosity, and Æschylus, melancholy, frowning, still consumed by the sorrow of being misunderstood by his people, contem-

plating the passing of Time, to which he dedicated his tragedies, sure that it would render him justice.

In the presence of this ocean of marble that extends its luminous depths throughout the interior of the Vatican, one thinks with amazement of the infinite treasures of inspiration and of labour included in this avalanche of art that seems to crush the visitor. One thinks of the shapeless blocks of Grecian marble extracted thirty centuries ago from the quarries of Mount Pentelicus, of the blocks that Roman slaves wrested from the hills of Carrara; one is astounded when considering the luminous inspirations, the battles with Nature, ever rebellious against allowing her secrets of naturalness and grace to be wrested from her; the unerring chisel-strokes that produced this gigantic accumulation of artistic works; and finally the procession of artists, who by the breath of genius animated the stone, filling it with the throb of life, passes in review before the imagination. At the head, the legendary Pygmalion, enamoured of his creations; in the centre, like a giant that forms the cuspis, the gloomy Michelangelo, and bringing up the rear, Canova, the Praxiteles of this century, he whom Napoleon treated as an equal, because of the close relationship existing between the sons of Fortune and the sons of Glory.

In the museum of the Vatican are found those famous works that are seen a thousand times in infinite reproductions. The group of Laocoön, the greatest marvel of sculpture, according to Michelangelo, who could not contemplate it without thrills of enthusiasm,

and in the presence of which emotion is inevitable, seeing the painful expression of that vigorous man and his two sons who contract their muscles in vain to free themselves from the constricting coils of the serpents sent by Apollo to devour them. Near this group, which seems to be the crystallisation of human agony, are the no less famous works of antiquity. The gladiators Kreugas and Damoxenos with raised fists, threatening the decisive blow of the pugilist, revealing the tension of their vigorous muscles beneath their skin; Perseus, beautiful as a goddess, showing the head of Medusa; Apollo of the Belvedere, a stupendous idealisation of masculine beauty; and Mercury, also called "of the Belvedere," on whose countenance, with its Olympic correctness, many have seen the portentous beauty of the effeminate Antinous.

It is in its sculpture that the corruption of the classic world stands revealed. Greeks and Romans, by reason of so greatly admiring the nude, by worshipping the human form in all its splendour, came finally to disregard sex, lamentably confusing the passions. The superb masculine beauty, with its ardent spirit of vigour, with the charm of harmoniously related muscles swelling the skin like an outburst of force, delighted them more than the rotundity of the feminine flesh, the soft, dimpled curves, the graceful lines, the firm protuberances, that constitute the beauty of women.

They finally came to believe, as in our century did that original thinker, Schopenhauer, that man is the true type of beauty, and woman an imperfect imitation.

And, as art is ever the faithful interpreter of the morality of the period, in the Grecian and Roman statuary, over and beyond its infinite beauty, the flush of an impure degeneracy can be detected.

It is true that never has the virile form attained such a degree of beauty as in those times when public games, dances, youthful training, and the lack of oppressive clothing, contributed to the making of each man a finished type of health and vigour. In the Vatican museum one contemplates with genuine pleasure a handsome bacchant, in which the marble glows with the most seductive outlines, and only when the spectator consults his catalogue, does he realise that this beauty is Antinous, the favourite of the Emperor Hadrian, in whose honour he built cities, colosseums, and obelisks. One admires a muse of correct and seductive charm, resting the lyre on its firm chest, the well-rounded arms and the countenance of feminine beauty, displaying its full back with harmonious lines, and one discovers with amazement that it represents Apollo, and is the portrait of one of those Grecian youths who struggled like lions in defence of the *patria,* and afterward, crowned with flowers, gave themselves up to the most degenerate pleasures.

Let us pass over these centuries of art and amorous promiscuity. As a background to these great works of antiquity that will live eternally as the idealisation of the flesh, one sees the sublime Pindar striking his amorous lyre in honour of his young pupils, and the great Julius Cæsar, invincible in combat, impressive in the Forum, becoming by night the husband of all the

women of Rome. The Vatican museum of sculpture astounds and confuses with its grandeur. Nevertheless one experiences even new enthusiasms in the museum of the tapestries, veritable marvels woven in Flanders according to designs painted by Raphael which now are in the British museum in London.

In all the notable departments of the Vatican, as well as the museums like that in the Sistine Chapel, or in Raphael's Loggie, if any imperfection exists, it is understood that it dates from the period when the army of Charles V, led by the Constable of Bourbon, took Rome by assault.

It was a peculiar form of religion, that shown by the brave Spaniards and Germans who composed the army of the very Catholic King of Spain and Emperor of Germany. They entered the capital of Christianity and did not leave a nun unravished, a church unrobbed, or a sacristan with a whole head. The Pope had to take refuge in the Castle of Sant' Angelo, from which he saw those who in their own country would have to flee from the Inquisition as a consequence of the mildest display of profanity, passing before the fortress mounted on donkeys grotesquely tricked out in the ceremonial robes of the cardinals and the pontiff.

On the other hand, it is true that, years afterward, the fiery duke of Alba entered Rome bent upon conquest, and that he was more considerate.

Like a good Catholic, on appearing before the Pope, he knelt and kissed his hand; but afterward, like a better soldier, he thrust him into a harsh prison, where

he kept him until his liege the king of Spain should dispose otherwise.

And those were the good old times of renowned Spanish piety!

XXII

RECOLLECTIONS OF ROME

OF all the monuments of ancient Rome, the Pantheon, constructed by Agrippa, son-in-law of Augustus, is the one whose primitive beauty is still best preserved.

Like all the other structures of antiquity, it did not escape being looted by the pontiffs of the Middle Ages, but they contented themselves with wresting from it the sheets of metal, which were its finest decoration, and they left the stones standing, respecting that audacious dome which still astounds the modern architect after having stood for twenty centuries.

Within this monument—despite the chapels with which devotion adorned it when it was converted from a pagan Pantheon into the temple of Santa Maria Rotonda—one recognises its antiquity; behind the columns he still seems to see the floating white veil of the Roman maiden, or he imagines that the mosaic of the pavement echoes the tramp of the heavy cothurnus.

Sixteen columns of red and green marble, with a girth so great as to resemble towers, sustain the portico with its triangular pediment, where the ancient reliefs are almost obliterated. Behind them the monument lifts its circular robust mass, topped by the prodigious dome, and in the centre opens an eye eight

meters in diameter, through which appears the sky letting light enter the interior of the temple.

The object for which the Pantheon was constructed is even more impressive than the grandeur of the building itself.

It must be admitted that the Roman people was the most tolerant of nations, the most indulgent in regard to religious beliefs. It persecuted but one cult, that of the Christians, but this was because it discerned something political in the new sect, and it was not mistaken. Primitive Christianity, so different and so at variance with the Catholicism of our day, was a revolutionary aspiration, a democratic movement, which, recognising all men as equals, proclaiming the abolition of slavery, and exalting the weak and humble to the level of the strong and powerful, threatened the tyranny of the Cæsars.

But aside from this persecution, more political than religious, it is indisputable that Rome never imposed her cult on conquered nations; on the contrary, she took their gods from them in order to carry them to the great metropolis and expose them there to public adoration.

This was the purpose of the Pantheon of Agrippa. All the deities venerated by the multitude of nations subjected by the power of Rome, the artistic gods of Greece as well as the sanguinary idols of Asia blackened with human soot, or the ferocious divinities of the North that smiled amidst the clashing of swords and the war-whoops of death, were removed to the Pantheon, and the same legionaries that had conquered

and enslaved their former devotees prostrated themselves before them.

In the times of the powerful Augustus the Pantheon must have presented a beautiful spectacle. The portico faced with great sheets of bronze and carved marbles; the colossal statues of Augustus and Agrippa standing on enormous pedestals that still exist; the dome plated on the exterior with bronze scales wrested through avarice from the emperors of Byzantium; and in the interior, between the Corinthian columns, the innumerable deities, the golden lamps burning before the sacred marbles, surrounded by garlands of flowers, caressed by the perfumes of the smoking alabaster vases on gilded tripods, and contemplating with hieratic rigidity the multitude prostrated at their feet.

To-day nothing but the skeleton of the ancient temple remains. The costly marbles, the stuccos which formed the interior decoration, have disappeared. The gold fleurons have been torn from the ceiling, and nothing remains but the sad and dingy ornamentation of a secularised church. In one chapel is the cenotaph of Raphael: a bust that recalls that sweet, feminine head within which stirred the most sublime inspirations, with a Latin epitaph by the famous Cardinal Bembo, in which it is said that nature brought the artist's career to a close through envy of his triumphs.

In another chapel is the sepulchre of Victor Emmanuel II. The first king of Italy lies interred in the monument of the first Cæsar of Rome. The immense bronze coffin set in the wall displays the name of the gentlemanly king with no other title than that of

Father of the Country, and hundreds of crowns of flowers, of bronze, of silver, and even of gold, some of them with masonic stars, others with the emblems of labour, cover the floor of the chapel, in testimony of posthumous admiration by all the cities of united Italy and by the numerous Italian colonies existing in America. The veterans of the great battles for independence, with their white moustaches, and their breasts covered with crosses, keep guard over the sepulchre, and the thousands of visitors sign their names in a great book placed at the disposal of the public as a tribute to the democratic king who, after immense sacrifices, succeeded in unifying the dismembered Peninsula.

It must be acknowledged that this Roman nation is grateful. It respects and defends the house of Savoy, because its gratitude for having achieved the unity of the *patria* is still warm; but aside from this passing regard for a dynasty, it is in its heart eminently republican.

There is good reason for this. In Rome one breathes the republic. In the dust of this soil are the ashes of citizens who were ever ready to sacrifice themselves for the Roman people. Even in the 10th century, when the ironclad despotism of crowned warriors kept the world in a state of darkness, Baron Crescenzio arose, restoring the Roman Republic, and finally ending his days as a hero, flinging himself from the top of the Mausoleum of Hadrian upon the lances of the army of Otho II, come from Germany to save the Pope, destroying the liberty of the Roman people.

Later, after the mystic republican fervour of Arnold of Brescia, appeared Niccolo di Rienzi, the attractive tavern keeper, converted into a tribune and great captain, who is one of the most interesting figures of the Middle Ages.

Near the Temple of Vesta still stand the remains of the palace occupied by the Roman tribune; a construction sustained by short, thick columns, upon which wind the complicated Byzantine reliefs.

That Republic, reviving Roman culture at the height of the Middle Ages, enriched its entire period with an atmosphere of art and poetry. The people gathered again in the Capitolium, which for centuries had been looked upon as an uninhabitable hill. The young tavern-keeper, the revolutionary artist, when not combating the nobility and the Pope, laboured to restore the Latin civilisation which had illuminated the world, and the first festival of the republic was the crowning of Petrarch, the fraternal friend of Rienzi, and the greatest poet of his period, on the summit of the Capitoline Hill.

Unfortunately, the dagger of a friar treacherously put an end to the last tribune, and the beautiful Roman Republic of the Middle Ages vanished like an ignis fatuus.

But there was still another Republic of Rome, of which thrilling souvenirs may be seen. In the door of San Pancrazio are still visible the bullet-pierced walls, as well as the bombs buried in the sloping banks, which recall the Republic of 1848, with its famous defence; that revolution in which the name of a young

general recently arrived from America, called Giuseppe Garibaldi, came to be known throughout Europe.

The horror of this fierce and tenacious struggle, of this frightful hecatomb, is still graven in the vicinity of the door of San Pancrazio. It seems as if that supreme night has not yet ended, when the Roman republicans and the handful of foreign revolutionists who blindly followed Garibaldi, having in front of them the powerful army of France, hated by all Europe for having dethroned Pius IX, and without the slightest hope of aid, fought hand to hand with the most sublime desperation, while not a man of them was willing to outlive the downfall of the republic. It seems as if one can still see the spare figure of Garibaldi with his disordered shock of blond hair, his yellow eyes sparkling beneath his lion-like brow, his red shirt bespattered with blood, and his sabre bent by the blows of a hand-to-hand struggle, appearing before his companions of the triumvirate to tell them in a voice hoarse with despair that resistance was no longer possible.

The Italian Cid, the gentleman of the Revolution, without fear, and without reproach, suffered deeply. In America his limbs were wrung by Inquisitional torments. He saw his beloved Anita die in his arms, and he was compelled to abandon her palpitating body in a hut, urged forward by his two remaining companions, who heard the approaching gallop of the pursuing Austrians. After having been a general and a dictator in Rome, he was compelled to work as a day-labourer and to endure hunger in America; he was

calumniated by his enemies and deceived by his protectors; he waged a death struggle for the Republic, and managed to free his native land from foreigners only to benefit a king; but as a reward for such efforts and labour, he to-day enjoys a glorification never achieved by any other man.

There is not a town in all Italy that does not possess a statue of Garibaldi.

Rome had recourse to the sumptuousness and power of sculpture to honour this warrior of the people.

The Janiculum is the highest of the seven hills on which Rome is built. At the foot of this eminence is the oak in whose shade Torquato Tasso wrote his epopee, and the monastary of Sant' Onofrio, where he died. On the summit the equestrian statue of Garibaldi has been erected; but so colossal is it that it can be seen at a distance that takes more than an hour to cover.

One approaches it along a broad avenue fringed with the busts of the most glorious of the officers of Garibaldi; a procession of heroes, of vigorous heads, covered, some of them by the kepi, and others by the broad-plumed hat. And upon a pedestal that resembles a palace adorned with magnificent groups of bronze, where appears the Garibaldian host making a bayonet charge, rises the chief, gripping his charger between his legs of steel, humble as ever in his bearing, with his round Hungarian cap over his floating curls, and the American poncho covering his famous red shirt.

There he is, receiving the adoration of the demo-

cratic world, contemplating at his feet, a short distance away, the dome of Saint Peter's, the agglomeration of the palaces of the Vatican; and the Pope, as often as he passes before the windows of his apartments, necessarily must see, silhouetted against the blue sky, that centaur of bronze, on whose pedestal glitters in letters of gold the war-cry of Garibaldi, which was the death sentence of temporal power:

"Roma o' morte!"

XXIII

THE SINGING CITY

NAPLES is the true Italy, that Italy which we all have seen in chromos and panoramas, in operettas and novels, with its enviable lightness of heart, its life lived in the open air, its poetic atmosphere, and its fondness for entertaining the newcomer without sullying the act by immediately extending a hand in solicitation of a tip.

With half a million inhabitants, and occupying less space than any other Italian city, it is actually the worst laid out, and possesses the most original appearance of any town in the world. There are entire districts which are occupied by only a few palaces, where dwell those privileged ones who come from all over Europe to revel in the beauty of the Gulf, and to enjoy an ever ardent sun and an African climate; while close beside the lordly mansions are groups of unsanitary huts, networks of winding alleys, where swarms a filthy, almost ragged, but light-hearted population, that thinks seriously of nothing but sleeping, and with a couple of sous' worth of macaroni which may be bought and eaten in the middle of the arroyo, with a romance for dessert, runs along more smoothly than a clock.

There is much of the Spaniard in this Neapolitan

people, before whose original customs the people of the North stand agape. Not without effect was Spain dominant here for two centuries. There still remain to-day, as souvenirs of the past, the statues and works of the beneficent Charles III, and, furthermore, the principal street of Naples, the artery through which flows the life-current of the whole city, is called the street of Toledo.

For people like this, who divert themselves and do not think; who, through their instinctive love of tradition, remain superstitious and dirty like their ancestors, the progress and political changes of the country are remedies that work very slowly. Italian unity, which has made its political effects so powerfully felt throughout the Peninsula, has been of some influence, but it may be said that it is still at the beginning of its task. The nomad population of lazzaroni that used to sleep in the streets and to multiply, while its children knew no other paternal dwelling than the sidewalk, no longer exists, nor does it happen any more, when the Neapolitan youth of the lower wards enters the barracks as a conscript, that when he strips, his skin adheres to his clothes on account of uninterrupted contact for ten years; but it is still the same Bohemian and boisterous people that, instead of talking, sings; that becomes intoxicated in the most joyous manner, and calls everyone who gives them a sou by the title of "excellence" or "most illustrious"; that takes its afternoon nap along the boulevards, and eats in the street; that has suffered with patience every invasion and tyranny, being eternally the slave either of the French, the

Spaniards, or the Austrians, the accomplice of the vagaries of Queen Joanna, or of the imbecile and brutal despotism of the last Neapolitan Bourbons, and that, in exchange, as if to demonstrate that what it lacks is not want of valour, resorts to nightly stabbing affrays over the most insignificant questions, making the pages of the newspapers drip with blood the following morning.

Whosoever has left them to sing and to eat their macaroni in the middle of the street has been their master without protest. On one occasion this people turned revolutionary, seeking to free itself from Spanish domination. The unhappy Masaniello, a man worthy of a better fate, committed the folly of taking his compatriots seriously. During the course of fifteen days the seditious horde of simple fishermen converted him into a general, a duke, and a king, and when they had him well raised on high, they let him fall, seeing him assassinated with the utmost indifference. Unhappy is he who compromises himself with people of this sort. It is better to write songs for them than to give them liberty. As long as Garibaldi was fighting in Sicily, none of these fiery tavern champions dared to assist him; but when he entered Naples a conqueror, the populace which a few days before was absolutist, and swore by Saint Januarius and the Bourbons, hurled themselves, intoxicated with enthusiasm, upon the paving stones, wishing to have the horse of the hero of Marsala pass over their bodies; and at night, in the vicinity of the general's lodging place, scarcely did a passer-by venture to speak aloud than thousands of

voices would exclaim in anguish: "Silence, silence, our father is sleeping!"

A famous people is this that lies through force of habit; that asks seven times its value for everything; that haggles for whole days; that breaks into a riot instinctively; and that gilds its poverty with the most unjustifiable joyousness. Daudet would find his Tartarin here under new aspects. The ever ardent sun, the glowing colours of the Gulf, the splendour of an eternally spring-like nature, introduce themselves into the brain and into the blood from the moment one opens his eyes. It is the homeland of the *dolce far niente*. To spend one's time working, without freedom of motion, and in some enclosed place, never! Death rather than that! For this reason the good Neapolitan, if he chances to be born with an active or industrious disposition, becomes a coachman, a cicerone, or he devotes his life to running the length of the streets at the tail end of a carriage, with lolling tongue, hoping against hope that a sou may chance to be flung at him.

This nation of fine stout fellows, as brown as if their flesh were made of baked clay, with almost bluish black hair and prominent eyes, that accompany their words with wild circumlocutions, is the Andalusia of Italy. When they speak they abuse the *z*'s and drawl their words in the most unintelligible manner. Their sayings and jests provide the entire Peninsula with material for laughter, and, as work is the direst of calamities, it is divided and avoided in the most equitable manner.

At the station one hands his valise to any ragged urchin, who scarcely wears on his ruddy flesh more than a breechclout, and the traveller enters Naples like Stanley in the interior of Africa, followed by a rosary of porters who pass his baggage from shoulder to shoulder, dividing amongst them what in any other place would not be sufficient for one. You trudge along streets and more streets, followed by some big, barefooted, half-naked giant who stares at you persistently with his prominent eyes; and when you button up your coat, feeling that the object of his desire is the pocket of your vest, he flings himself avidly upon the smoking cigarette stub you have just flung away, which is what he had been watching with such tenacity. A gentleman of better appearance than your own approaches you, and when your hand touches your hat to reply to his reverent salutation, you turn cold hearing him talk of the *bambinas* who lack bread, of the honour of the family which is endangered; and the honour is saved with a sou, accepted with innumerable genuflections and theatrical gestures in order to restrain a tear of gratitude which seems about to make its appearance, but which never does.

A nation of light-hearted actors, that saves its tongue for stupendous lies, and that talks with the greatest facility, making use of eyes and hands. From here come the most famous comedians; and the quarry is still as valuable as the artistic figures that have been extracted from it.

Every carriage-driver is a forceful mimic, and one must understand his language in order not to be robbed

in this country where the tariffs are written in order that no one may abide by them. Scarcely do they see a stranger, the *signor francese,* as he is called, strolling along the opposite sidewalk, than they begin to crack their whips without moving from the coach box. A wink is the question concerning the price of the drive, and the driver replies by raising his hand with two fingers held stiff, which is equivalent to two lire. A wink of protest, and then he raises only one finger. A new negative, which the customer accompanies by passing an index finger across the middle of the other, with the gesture of cutting it in two, which signifies an offer of half a lira. The driver gazes heavenward, as if scandalised at the proposal; he tears his hair as in the last act of a tragedy; and finally, when you turn and walk away, he whips up his horse and crosses the street like a noisy whirlwind, leaps to the sidewalk, and assists you to climb in, brushing off your back with affectionate slaps, assuring you that he can do no less than serve a gentleman *tanto gentille.* Scarcely has he got you into his *carrozza,* when the haughty mimic of a few moments ago becomes converted into the most facetious and unbearable of charlatans, as if the words bubbling from his mouth had been stored up during his long siestas lying on the box in the warmth of the sun. He asks you for a cigarette, he turns around, giving his back to the horse, which trots on in perfect liberty; he asks from what country you have come; he calls *bello paese* either Siberia or Spain, for, in his opinion, all countries are equally beautiful that send to Naples travellers that give half a lira; he wants to

know what your compatriots are like, and what you think of the Neapolitans, with their amplitude of flesh, and their superb brown amber heads, and whether you are going to leave him, oh, if you are going to leave him! Who knows but what for five lire he would wind up by handing you the key of his house! In addition to all this, while speaking he is continually exchanging winks and movements of his hands with the other drivers whom he passes, and with the unemployed ones who adorn the corners of the long street of Toledo; and a troop of youngsters as agile as monkeys leap up on the step, shouting at the top of their voices, offering newspapers and matches; bands of urchins run along behind the carriages, always begging; songs issue from every house; on the sidewalks one stumbles upon a strolling musician at every four steps; they all talk with voices in highest key; the streets are a perfect Babel, and even though you may be accustomed to the bustle and stir of the Spanish cities, you will think you are in an open-air lunatic asylum, with the shouting, the winking, and the waving of hands.

But if a priest chances to appear carrying a viaticum under a yellow parasol, preceded by a few torches, the uproar in front and in the rear suddenly ceases; the drivers uncover, and, no matter how great your haste, you will not succeed in forcing the jabberer, while in the performance of his function as coachman, to permit of this, and of that, with the Christ and the Madonna, or to stir out of his tracks, or to cease figuring in the cortège of honour at the tail end of the sacred procession.

The old-time lazzarone, with his absurd superstitions, still exists in every Neapolitan. They do not believe very much in God, but no one can make them doubt that the blood of Saint Januarius liquefies every year on the day of his festival, and during their moments of hunger they lack but little of going, as did their ancestors, and kneeling before the *santo benedetto,* asking him to work the miracle of giving them a sou, and then insulting him afterward on seeing that the saint does not care to indulge in miracles of this description.

By day Naples is a tumultuous, buzzing hornet's nest. At night, when the moon fills the waters of the tranquil gulf with restless silver fish, and the islands and promontories stand out with foggy profiles against the great blue expanse, the city is an eternal serenade.

Here everyone sings. The best example of this is to be found at the street corners, which are occupied by venders of musical compositions, some of them printed, but the greater part in manuscript, which, suspended from threads, tapestry the walls. The fat old crones who haggle along the winding alleys, their baskets filled with vegetables; the elaborately arrayed servant girls; the wenches with their fierce faces and their floating percale skirts; and the young braves, their microscopic felt hats thrust over one ear, and wearing enormous red cravats, hurl themselves upon this musical fodder labelled with a *"Tu m' ami,"* or *"Tu no m' ami più,"* or *"Dormi, mia bella"*; in fine, themes dealing with love, or with soothing of the beloved to sleep, which are sung at night before the door

of the house while digesting their macaroni, or in the tavern, where the obsession for music always winds up in blows.

Here, even the itinerant vender is musical, and the *macheronaro,* the *mellonaro,* the *ostricaro,* the *sorbettaro,* the *castagnaro* and all the other members of the ragged tribe ending in *aro* that hawk their merchandise through the streets, do so with veritable romances, some so original and beautiful that many of them might well be used as the *Leitmotif* of modern operas.

No other city offers such an appearance at night as Naples. The crowd masses together and shoves along the sidewalks of Toledo Street, around the bands of singers and musicians intoning impassioned serenades that set one to dreaming of a little white house surrounded by prickly pear bushes on the coast, before which, turned sarcastic through jealousy, the barefooted troubadour, in his red tam-o'-shanter, sings, with one hand on his knife, awaiting the approach of his rival; or one hears nautical romances in which the guitars and mandolins imitate the swish of the gentle waters of the gulf. From every *osteria* or *trattoria* issues a feminine voice warbling the most recent popular song. The people swarm into the *bancos del lotto,* to lay their wagers on the combination of two numbers, or on the chance, which, according to the rules set down in *The Dwarf* or some other cabalistic book, has just been inspired by a stumble in the street, the meeting with a friend, or any other unusual event. Down at the end of the dark alleys glow the lighthouses of the port and the red lanterns of the ships; on the cor-

ners, near the electric lamps, pictures of the Virgin and of the saints, painted on boards, are displayed in the dim light of lanterns and tapers, and below them sound faint hisses of long-trained sirens, winking their eyes in the shadows with suggestive offers. Until midnight priests pass in groups, plump, brown, and red, with their fuzzy round hats on their heads, and their stogies in their mouths, while before the doors of the great cafés, upon high platforms, are orchestras of over twenty musicians playing snatches of Puccini's *La Bohème*, the opera recently applauded by this nation of artists.

The impresarios of opera would do very little business here. No theatres offer what can be found gratuitously on the streets of Naples, where at night even the stone posts seem to sing. Time passes unheeded while the visitor wanders from one chorus to another leaving an orchestra to listen to a street tenor, and when at last weariness compels him to return to the hotel, on crossing the great piazzas he sees above the roofs, piercing the luminous sky, a broad-pointed black blotch, with a rose-coloured cloud floating about its summit.

That is Vesuvius.

XXIV

THE GULF OF NAPLES

"SEE the Gulf of Naples and then die," say these Andalusians of Italy, rolling their eyes with an expression of ecstatic rapture in order to extol the beauty of their native land. Although the affirmation sins through exaggeration, as do all those made by these people, it must be admitted that in few countries can so splendid a panorama be enjoyed.

The great Humboldt, after running all over the world as a scientific traveller, declared that on the entire globe there existed but three cities that deserved to be such because of their topographic situation: Lisbon, Naples, and Constantinople.

The view of the Gulf from the promontory of Posilipo, having the sea in the foreground and taking in with a single glance the entire expanse of the bay with its islands of Capri, Procida, and Ischia in the background, leaves on the retina an impression of such colour, light, and beauty that a long time must pass before the blue panorama with its reflections of gold becomes dimmed and fades away.

While the horses are trotting along the streets near the port, the forest of masts dressed with flags of every colour seen through the crossings, a strong odour of shellfish, and a shouting that seems to be the out-

come of a thousand quarrels at once, announces arrival at the suburb of Santa Lucia. That is the district of the Neapolitans of bronze; there are the taverns where every night the police must enter to fling down the gauntlet to the bellicose adherents of the association of the Camorra; the chub-cheeked, thick-lipped women, whose skin resembles varnished goat pelts, with their greasy hair and their upturned petticoats, displaying their fingernails and exhausting the dictionary of the ward over the slightest question; the fishermen, clad only in wide breeches and shirts, displaying on their hairy breasts a mass of scapularies, and over their bushy curls the gray tam-o'-shanter; the little carts of vegetables; the portable stoves where boils the macaroni; the strolling comedians, smooth-shaven like priests, forming a chorus and tricked out with an absurd headgear, a cane, and a great cravat, who recite monologues accompanied *sotto voce* by accordions and guitars; the *ostricari,* who spread their motley wares over the sea wall crying their enormous oysters, savoury, filled with meat, at thirty centimes a dozen, and, at the same time, as if they were apothecaries for the poor, selling herbs to cure all manner of diseases; the crumbling white houses with flat roofs, like Moorish dwellings, with balconies of rotting wood, where the young girls of Santa Lucia, fierce cows that they are, pretty and dirty, with tongues of scorpions, sew, eat, sleep, or embrace their lovers; and everything sheltered within the ward intones songs, haggles at the top of its voice, howls instinctively, from the girl of the street who offers her lips and greets the *signor francese*

with facetious raillery, to the mob of naked youngsters that rushes miraculously among the horses' feet, or hangs on the back of the carriage, asking by grace of the Madonna and Saint Januarius that his *eccellenza* hand out a sou. All this misery, this dungheap animated by noisy worms, that extends around the hill of Naples and the sea, becomes attractive and even beautiful gilded by an ardent sun, and having as a background the undulating blue sheet of the Gulf with its amphitheatre of mountains and the smoking Vesuvius.

Then, continuing along the shore, one passes through La Mergelina, the district occupied by the people of the sea, and in imagination thinks he sees Lamartine with his enthusiasm of twenty years wearing the short, loose jacket and the cap of the fisherman, eating *polenta,* mingling with the old sailors on whose wrinkled faces the chin is merged with the nose; and every barefoot girl that passes with her striped sash and white camisole, her black eyes glowing beneath the basket of fish crushing down her crown of hair, recalls Graziella, the impassioned girl who dies slowly, like a light gradually flickering out, on seeing her youthful poet take his leave for ever.

In truth this panorama is the best setting an artist could find for scenes of love. The quiet, foamless sea gently caresses the cliffs of Posilipo; the forest of slender pines, the gardens with their masses of flowers and their sprays of green tufts, slope down to the water's edge by rapid descents; the undulations of the Gulf repel the caress of the sun with a sparkle of gold; the villas and kiosks which have their foundations in

the sea and their roofs beside the road become tinged a soft rose-colour; opposite, many leagues away, scattered over the lower part of Cape Massa which closes in the Gulf, the towns along the shore shine white, surrounded by a golden nimbus; in the atmosphere, laden with light and perfumes, there is the sound of kisses and of flapping wings; one feels the warm thrill of love in the veins; one experiences the necessity of uniting his lips to other lips, and he dreams of the joy of living in one of those little white houses surrounded by cactus bushes beside the beloved woman, seeing noisy Naples ever in the distance, with no other fortune than a boat, no other clothing than the wide breeches and red cap, taking one's food from the depths of this Gulf to the tune of the dreamy barcarolles, which undoubtedly charm the fish so that they voluntarily glide into the net.

But we have now reached the hill of Posilipo and the sweet poesy has ended. The lower part of Naples disappears behind the small, rocky island, the Megaris of Pliny, on whose crest rises the rude Castello dell' Ovo, reminiscent of Spanish domination.

The famous restaurants of Posilipo stand in a row, their white terraces protruding above the sea. Oysters are swallowed by the dozens, and one devours the famous soup *a la marinera,* made of toasted bread and fish and various kinds of shellfish. And while the gaze, somewhat beclouded by the strong wine of Sorrento, follows the progress of the boats, insignificant mosquitoes that slip over the surface of the Gulf, smooth and blue as a Venetian mirror with the moun-

tains for a frame, the innumerable street artists of Naples parade before the table: itinerant comedians with red frock coats and enormous collars, who relate the misadventures of Don Peppino in falsetto voices and with the gesticulations of a monkey; girls from Santa Lucia who intone melancholy love romances, fixing the vague gaze of their yellow eyes on the horizon; young women of Castellemare, beautiful and dirty, bringing to mind Venus discovered in a stable, whirling in the ever-increasing delirium of the tarantelle, tracing complicated arabesques on the floor with their bare and agile feet, whirling about their heads the tambourine, which accompanies the wild dance with dull resonance, while the great hoops of gold leap in their ears; and, floating through the atmosphere, which vibrates with the excess of light and the murmur of the insects, is a noisy confusion of guitars and mandolins, of violins and pianos, issuing from every house, causing a musical vibration to float out over the sea.

Again the horses gallop along the hills of Posilipo, which are covered with luxuriant gardens; and from the highest point, among the slender pines, one takes in the panorama of Naples. In the first wing, the forest of Posilipo; in the second place, the Gulf, caressing with undulating embrace the pink and white city which extends in a gigantic semicircle, climbing up the hills as if urged forward by the waves; and, closing the picture, the left claw of the Gulf, Cape Massa, dotted with the white spots of the groups of houses, and that gloomy hill above whose smoking crest its dense breath issues either straight and broad at the end, like a pine

tree formed of vapours, or wrapped in the interminable curves of a turban of mist.

Turning one's back to Naples one sees the second part of the famous Gulf, that of Pozzuoli, which advances foamy, ever turbulent, between Posilipo and Cape Miseno.

The horses descend at a gallop down the stony declivities of the promontory, and when they gain the beach we pass through several fisher-villages, where the people, almost naked, revealing their red flesh tanned by the sun and the wind, work over the nets, while ferocious dogs rush out with threatening growls to meet the traveller. Passing in front of the little whitewashed houses, glancing in through the open windows, one can guess the poverty and the heedlessness in which these poor people exist. For a kitchen a brick fireplace where boils the pot of *polenta;* for a dining room—and a place where not to dine—the entire beach; and in the interior of the house, converted into an alcove, the beds of the parents and the children stand in a row, beside those of the guests which every family has in order to better help it withstand its poverty. And these imbeciles, by way of sole decoration in their miserable huts, beside the picture of the patron saint, have the pictures of the sovereigns of Italy and of the Imperial family of Germany; as if the Triple Alliance, with its exaggerated tributes levied for sustaining the armies, were to give them the morsel of bread which their stomachs demand at all hours.

Fortunately, the beauty of the landscape, the magic power of the sun, which adds a splendour of purple

to the most repugnant rag, softens the fatal impression caused by so much poverty.

On these pine-covered hills, in the centre of a vineyard, is the tomb of Virgil the vigorous singer of the fall of the Trojans. On that cliff, which seems to be floating above a ring of foam, was where the poet composed his harmonious verses. He found his inspiration in the murmur of the waters which centuries before had rocked the boat of a blind Hellene with an Olympic forehead, the father of poesy, who, from his tomb, guided the footsteps of Virgil, as he, centuries later, led Dante by the hand.

The view possesses an infinite expansion before the deserted Gulf of Pozzuoli, and each town, each ruin, evokes a recollection. To this pleasant beach the Roman patriciate used to come to spend the summer season. Here were the resorts of the senators who had grown rich by virtue of subornation; the magic palaces of those who returned laden with riches from governing provinces; the marvels of marble built by the emperors for summer residences, when their august hides needed to be wetted in the dominions of Neptune.

Here is Cumæ, the most ancient city of Italy, founded by the Greeks from Eubœa, where the famous Cumæan sybil, from the lower end of a temple whose ruins still exist, foretold the future. Here the Dead Sea, where the Roman squadron had its principal station, the big-bellied triremes issuing thence to the encounter of the Carthaginian ships; here the famous grotto of Pozzuoli, a tunnel of more than seven hundred meters, constructed by the Romans; the lakes of

Fusaro and of Licola, the first a work of madness by the Cæsars, who, not content with destroying men, wished to violate Nature; the ruins of the temples of Diana and of Neptune; the villa of Julius Cæsar, in which Agrippina, the mother of Nero, was assassinated by order of her son, who wished to contemplate open the womb wherein he had been conceived; and on the lower part of Pozzuoli, far from the cathedral where the famous musician Pergolesi is buried, one comes upon the Serapeum, revealing in its upright columns the effects of the games and the liberties which the sea has taken with it.

Built upon soil subject to volcanic disturbance, this temple has been alternately raised above the sea and submerged at different periods. At the present time the sea has retreated over a hundred meters, but the floor of the temple is still covered with sand and the marble columns are perforated by the molluscs as far as the level of the waters. The four entrances to the temple, with their tritons and sea horses of marble, are still standing, as well as the altar before which the Egyptian merchants, builders of the temple, concluded all their dealings.

On the highest part of Pozzuoli, as an eternal threat that some day the tragedy of Pompeii may be repeated, is the famous Solfatara of Avernus, a circle that takes more than half an hour to pass around, formed by the convulsions of Nature; a crater apparently extinct, with its broad floor overgrown with bushes, but which expels through various fissures unbearable puffs of sulphurous vapour. Walking about the gigantic amphitheatre the

ground burns the feet, one feels the hot vapour of the inferno flaming beneath the earth's crust; one hears the lowing of the subterranean sulphurous torrents, and if a stone is thrown vigorously against the ground, the blow resounds like a cannon shot, echoing through the immense cavern existing below, beneath the crust ten meters in thickness that covers the ancient volcano.

The Solfatara is a breathing place which Vesuvius possesses in this part of the Gulf, one of its many relief-valves. But the traveller cannot fail to experience a certain inquietude on finding himself in front of the black fissures through which escape the ardent respiration of an unknown danger, and he marvels at the tranquil indifference of these little white towns that, peering into the Gulf, behold their reflections smiling in the blue crystalline waters, never giving a thought to the inferno roaring at their backs.

XXV

THE RESURRECTED CITY—I

WHEN the government employé, after having taken up the entrance ticket, which by the way, costs two lire, threw open the whirling iron barrier, I felt a thrill of emotion run the length of my spine.

I was on the point of realising one of the dreams of my life; I was about to find myself plunged suddenly into the depths of antiquity, walking along streets that still retained the footprints of those who had trodden them eighteen centuries before; seating myself on marble benches that had been grazed thousands of times by the purple tunic of the matron, the toga of the patrician, and the veil of the vestal virgin; exploring the attractive, beautiful dwellings of a nation artistically and morally corrupted; pretending that now, in this 19th century, I am a citizen of that voluptuous city which contemplated itself by day in the smooth mirror of the Gulf of Naples, which possessed as a torch by night the ruddy, fitful flicker of the neighbouring Vesuvius, and which, after having been concealed in the bowels of the earth for sixteen centuries, rises anew like an animated book on which the mysteries of antiquity can be deciphered.

Before me lay a winding road fringed with pines and aloes, that twines about the sinuosities of a lava hill

covered with vineyards. By this route one reaches Pompeii, a resurrected city; and with legs trembling from emotion I hurled myself forward, almost running between the groups of English and German families, who were correct, gloved, elegant, as if bound for a reception.

I ran, in my eagerness, as if I feared I might die before seeing in reality those marvels so often studied in books. And as I hurried breathless around the turns and windings of the beautiful road which lay bathed in a springtime sun filtering through the branches, tracing arabesques of gold and shadow upon the dusty ground, the whole history of the city rapidly unfolded in my mind. First its foundation in the 6th century before the Vulgar Era, by a mixed people, in which there were more Greeks than Italians; its submission to Rome at the termination of the Marsian war; and afterward Pompeii, famous for its beauty and its attractions, with its voluptuous palaces, where the Roman patricians retired when fatigued by the revolutionary agitations in the Forum; its extensive commerce, the wealth of its inhabitants, and the refinement of their pleasures, which converted it into the principal city of the Campagna. Here lived the historian Sallust in an artistic house, surrounded by beautiful women; and here also Cicero spent his summer vacations, far from the tribune which consumed his intellectual vigour, and wrote the celebrated treatises *De Officiis*.

Then, as a warning of the final catastrophe, came the earthquake of the year 63, which shook the whole Campagna, and ruined a great part of Pompeii. But

the city, so maddened by its beauty that it failed to recognise the danger, rose again above the ruins as if by magic, and sixteen years afterward, when much of the work of reconstruction was still uncompleted, on the twenty-third of November of the year 79, occurred the supreme catastrophe, the rain of fire and ashes that spread a gigantic shroud over the capital of joy. Then followed sixteen centuries in the tomb, in darkness and silence; the name of Pompeii, preserved only in two letters from Pliny the Younger, which set the hair on end, recounting the horror of one who had witnessed the cataclysm. The location of this tomb was absolutely unknown by mankind until, during the régime in Naples of him who afterward became Charles III in Spain, a group of peasants, digging in the fields, came upon the broken roofs of the city, extracted works of art, some objects of everyday use, antiquities that revealed the customs of the first half of the century of Augustus, and then the Sicilian monarch ordered the excavation at the cost of the State, in order systematically to disclose the historic treasure.

From that time, with the exception of occasional intermissions, the extensive lava hill has been excavated with extreme care, and the greater part of the city is now uncovered.

It is impossible to describe one's feelings upon arriving at the Porta Marina and seeing the road leading to the entrance, paved with great pieces of blue rock, and the vaulted passage, which in the form of an inclined tunnel perforates the thick wall. On the upper parts are the first houses, through whose doorways it

seems as if the original inhabitants are about to look out at any moment.

Even the niche beside the portal, which served as a sentry-box for the Roman sentry, is excavated, and farther on, among the first of the dwellings, stands the custom-house, with a little window where the employé of the Empire collected the duties, and the vaults where the merchandise was stored.

How may one describe this city, which suddenly surges forth even more new and interesting than can be imagined on reading the accounts of former travellers? How restrain the imagination, so often exalted by the shapeless ruins of the Roman Forum reconstructed by virtue of so much effort, when here in Pompeii, life, paralysed for centuries, still throbs as in the times of Augustus, and completely brings back the ancient world?

It is not possible to see ruins in Pompeii. It is still the city of the first century, in the days before the eruption, into which the people of the present day have entered through magic art.

In the stone sentry-box I saw the legionary resting on his lance, his legs bare, the bronze cuirass protecting his chest. The people of the adjacent port were crowding around the Porta Marina; the Greek sailors with Phrygian caps, broad-plaited breeches, and their mantles fastened over one shoulder, watching the droves of slaves bending beneath the weight of the bales of goods just unloaded from the trireme recently come from Samos or Athens. The Egyptians, yellow, majestic, with tunics of every colour, their curly false

beards flowing over their chests, and the mysterious expression of the Sphinxes in their eyes; the Greek slaves, returning from the fountain with painted amphoræ on their heads, erect, never moving with the oscillations of their flexible slender waists; the patricians, returning from their villas in the Campagna, almost lying down in their golden chariots that climbed with a noisy clatter up the flagged slope of the entrance; the gladiators, sinewy, with enormous limbs and small heads, surrounded by their admirers, who are returning from a drinking bout in the taverns on the outskirts, their arms fraternally linked, forgetting that the next day in the arena they must rend one another limb from limb; the vestal virgin who passes like a phantom, light, airy, and wrapped in her white veils; the priests of Isis, ferocious of mien, guarding behind their wrinkled brows the secret and terrible mysteries of the Egyptian cult; the ancients with long beards who, crowned with flowers, libate the sacred cup, and cut the throat of the bull before the altar of the Olympic divinities; the Latin poet, his round head uncovered, concealing beneath his mantle the tablets whereon he has engraved his verses, strolling along the beach, and repeating iambics and hemistichs to himself in low tones, accompanied by the striking of his cothurnus upon the blue flags; the matrons, concluding their stroll through the groves at the foot of Vesuvius, striding along with the vigorous tread of healthy young women, thinking of the tedium awaiting them within the marital gynæceum; the painted harlots, with no other clothing than the Greek chiton, through the opening of

which peeps a slender bare leg with the red sandal, wearing fresh branches on their breasts.

Yes; one sees all this at the gates of Pompeii. The blocks of blue stone that cover the ground or constitute the stout wall saw this same thing for centuries. The imprint of the shoes, the inscriptions engraved by the stylus, still exist on their surface, and from them emanates that mysterious power which excites the imagination and causes one to behold with strange clarity the past in all its splendour.

When one enters the city and loses himself in its network of streets, exclamations of astonishment are continuous: one imagines himself to be wrapped in the Roman mantle, with all the majesty of a Latin citizen, or the lightness of a Greek sailor.

The assertion that no modern city is as comfortable and as beautiful as was Pompeii should not be taken as an exaggeration. The streets all straight, and neither so narrow as to prevent ventilation and transit, nor so broad as to expose one to the fire of the midday sun; the surface of all of them paved with great blue slabs, over which the water drained without forming mud or pools; sidewalks everywhere more than two handbreadths in height, thus protecting the passer-by from being grazed by the swift chariots, and, at every crossing, three blocks laid in a row from one side of the street to the other, over which the Pompeians could pass without wetting their feet.

And the houses?—The house of each citizen was a paradise, beautified by art, within which everything was provided. The majority of them are still stand-

ing, and the visitor only wishes he were a millionaire so that he might reconstruct one of these dwellings and end his days in it, drinking wine in golden cups, to the accompaniment of the melodies of the nude Grecian flutists, like a citizen of the times of Augustus.

Although on walking along the streets the echo of one's footsteps is repeated as in the avenues of a cemetery, nevertheless one does not feel alone. A whole world, fantastic, but animated and brilliant, seems to swarm through the interior of these houses, with their walls adorned by frescoes, and their pavements of mosaic, where in other days rested the bare feet of the beautiful Pompeian women, and where now, alas! dart big-bellied green lizards, eternal mistresses of ruins.

The threshold of each house reveals its purpose. Those of the citizens have the doors formed of two leaves with the threshold smooth. The business establishments, which comprised almost half the city of Pompeii, had sliding doors, and the threshold still conserves the groove over which slid the wooden doorways.

This was a light-hearted people. On every street there were two or three taverns or houses where warm drinks were served, similar to our modern cafés. The marble show-cases are still preserved, with the orifices for the amphoræ, the desk of the proprietor where the money was changed, and on the walls suggestive pictures with soldiers and adventurers who, cup in hand and staggering, sing the glory of the wine of Sezze, according to the Latin inscriptions. The barber shops, the shoe shops, the bakeries with their mills for grind-

ing flour, the two theatres, the circus, the inns, may still be seen, and on some corners the notice-boards yet standing, painted with vermilion, announcing the comedy which is to take place in the theatre, or offering rooms to let.

This marvellous city, in which life became petrified so that coming generations might behold it, cannot be described by a single stroke of the pen. There is work for some time here; and that which gives the most concern is not the difficulty of description, nor the arduousness of translating impressions, startling as they are in their reality; but the gymnastics of words it is necessary to attempt, the tortuosities and capers of style that must be employed in order not to alarm the staid gentlemen, nor to bring a flush to the face of the lady who may read this, because of the customs and decorations of this people, liberal and immoral to an amazing degree.

XXVI

THE RESURRECTED CITY—II

IN order that the reader may form an approximate idea of the appearance of the beautiful dwellings of the Pompeian patricians I must resort to imagination, which proved so fruitful to Bulwer Lytton, the author of *The Last Days of Pompeii,* and thus assisted we will run through the city, seeing it as it was in the days of Augustus.

It is not yet time to enter the temples, to stroll through the Forum, nor to attend the performances in the two theatres, the comic and the tragic. We have already made the acquaintance of the taverns, and I dare not venture as yet to conduct you to the famous alley of the lupanars. I believe, then, that it is best to enter the house of a patrician, that of the historian Sallust, that of Vesonius Primus, that of Cæcilius Jucundus, or any other of the aristocratic dwellings that are still standing, for they all present an identical appearance in the interior.

The word *Salve* is found written on the threshold of the first door, called that of the *area;* and in the corridor, running between this and the door of the atrium, there can be seen on the wall, painted in mosaic, an enormous and exceedingly ugly black dog, his hair bristling, his tusks displayed, as if about to spring upon

the visitor, with the inscription CAVE CANEM (beware of the dog), which shows these merry Pompeians to have been jesters of the first order.

Now we are in the atrium, an enclosed court, the ceiling sustained by beautiful marble columns, and left uncovered in the centre, so that the rain flowing along the roof, or *compluvium*, might fall into the *impluvium*, a cool cistern which is found in every Pompeian house.

The pavement of the atrium is of delicately wrought mosaic, with complicated, gayly coloured arabesques like those in Oriental rugs, and round about it, with no other external communication than the great doors which give light and ventilation, are the rooms, or *cubicula*, of the master of the house, decorated with paintings, mosaics, and sculpture. In one of them sleeps the patrician upon the masonwork couch covered by silk quilts, and the gaze of the surfeited man wanders over the frescoes on the walls, which represent the most seductive mythologic scenes: Bacchus disclosing the beauty of Ariadne; satyrs pursuing nymphs; Diana bathing her chaste beauty in the tranquil fount. In another room is the library with its rolls of papyrus, on which the chronicles of Rome are inscribed, or which contain on their rolled surfaces the immortal songs of the Latin poets. The largest of the *cubicula* is the winter dining room, adjoining the kitchen, with its great window through which the slaves pass the steaming viands.

Beyond the atrium is the *tablinum*, or reception hall, decorated with columns and groups of marble statuary

in which the faces, instead of reflecting the Olympic serenity of the Greek statues, seem to be stirred with spasms of lubricity. Here the master of the house awaits us, wrapped in his white linen mantle, and invites us to be seated on folding chairs with purple cushions. The conversation turns upon what is being done just now by Augustus, the divine Cæsar, and the most recent epigrams upon his manner of caressing Livia; of what is being said in the Roman Forum about the corruption of the patricians and the increasing bestiality of the populace; and finally, as you, O reader, and I have the faces of respectable persons, incapable of abusing hospitality, or of tasting the forbidden fruit of another, the Pompeian, in an outburst of confidence, wishes to display his whole house to us, to show us the gynæceum, where the women vegetate like Oriental odalisques, and only the closest relatives are allowed to enter.

We cross the corridor adjoining the *tablinum,* where the slave with his shorn head, and his feet painted white, stands guard by day as well as by night, and we are now in the *xystus,* the most beautiful part of the house, a cool court where flowers are cultivated, and where the basins of fine porphyry sing at all hours beneath the streams of water which plump marble Cupids allow to escape.

The entire peristyle is decorated with stuccos and paintings in bright colours. Rosaries of fat Cupids run or fly over the dadoes and cornices, pursuing one another with graceful capers. The everlasting hairy and malodorous satyr threatens the rose-coloured

beauty, who flees, dropping the gauze that covered her charms; the white swan, in whose entrails burns the prolific fire of Jupiter, caressing with his bill the snowy form of Leda; the sacred bull runs along the wall carrying on his back the seductive Europa who, terrified by the swiftness of the flight, abandons herself completely; and in the centre of this museum of art the women of the house sew and sing, with the pointed coiffure of the Roman woman covered with powdered gold dust, enveloped in white tunics that reveal harmonious curves, bright shades of rose colour, voluptuous penumbras of the firm folds of the flesh.

But we must not remain long in the gynæceum. The good Pompeian is suspicious, he knows his city, and he does not like to have his women seen. This is revealed by the paintings of the gynæceum themselves, as in every house there appears as a favourite picture the scene in which Diana, surprised at her bath by the curious Acteon, rises up offended and converts him into a stag. But the Pompeian youth is not perturbed in the presence of the terrifying picture; the woody and complicated horns given to the indiscreet Greek lad by the goddess impress him but little, and it is undoubted that more than once he has cautiously entered the gynæceum, even if only for the sake of imitating Diana, causing the master of the house to feel like Acteon from the brows up.

After this visit to the women's department we pass on to the other rooms of the house. The bath, with its piscina of transparent marble; the *lararium* where the household Lares were kept, the protectors of the

dwellings, bathed by the light of the bronze and silver lamps that affected the most indecent forms; the kitchen; the granary; the pantry; and the cellar, this last a room of utmost importance for a convivial people which brought the porous amphoræ with the most famous wines from every part of Italy, or from Greece.

Now we are in the street again. We walk along the broad colonnades of the Forum, where we are assaulted by the venders of amulets, who see their business unfailingly assured through the superstition of this people. There was not a Pompeian who did not display upon his breast handfuls of mysterious trinkets to which he attributed a supernatural power; little figures, heads of satyrs; horns of coral, and tiny goat's trotters.

In the covered theatre, where the comedies are represented, the people are bubbling over with eagerness to see the frightful masks of the actors and to witness the licentious scenes, where a libidinous muse reveals herself with brutal nakedness. In the theatre devoted to tragedy, big and uncovered, like a gladiatorial arena, the slaves are spreading the heavy awning, the orchestra is playing the prelude, and the chorus is preparing to explain in a reposeful and simple song the misadventures which are to be represented on the stage; the audacity of Prometheus, representative of human desires, stealing the sacred fire from the gods, and insulting them valorously when he finds himself in difficulty.

But why should we enter there? Let us continue on our way. Let us go to the temple of Isis, the place devoted to that race of merchants coming from the

heart of Africa; a mysterious people whose walk is a glide, as if fearing the sound of their footsteps, and who disturb the Pompeians with the glance of their little yellow eyes that flame mysteriously above their melancholy countenances.

At the door stands an image resting an index finger on the point of its nose, imposing silence; the people enter, reverent, and with heads bowed beneath the fixed stare of the priests who exhibit their spherical craniums completely shaven and their bodies covered by a gayly coloured dalmatic.

The robust columns, tipped by the symbolic lotus flower, sustain the great slabs of stone that form the ceiling, and in the centre, at the head of a dark staircase which no profane person may tread, covered by a canopy in severe lines, is the black marble Isis staring fixedly with her dead eyes.

Near the image, and hanging from the wall or from the columns handfuls of offerings suggestive of a corresponding number of miracles may be seen, as in the other temples; hands and feet, chests and eyes, all of wax or of metal, placed there by the sick who have been cured by the goddess, exactly as to-day Santa Lucia gives sight to the blind, or the Virgin of Lourdes renders physicians and druggists superfluous.

The devotees, one by one, approach the foot of the altar, first handing their rich offerings to the priest: purses of money for sacrifices, young ewes, white bulls, which have been left outside. They interrogate the goddess concerning the future, with voices trembling with emotion. Usually Isis preserves her imposing

rigidity, but on some occasions oh, prodigy!—her arms move, her eyes glow, and her head inclines, while the multitude, overcome by the miracle, fall prostrate, howling and kissing the tunics of the impassive priests.

Unfortunately, the catastrophe which buried Pompeii gave no time to set things in order, and upon excavating the remains of the temple of Isis they came upon the articulations of the statue, and to-day one may even climb the little secret stairway leading to the hollow pedestal of the image where the assistants of the temple concealed themselves in order to pull the string to work the miracles.

Nihil novi sub sole.

Those sacristans who, in our own times, make the images of Christ sweat blood, or have the saints strike blows on the windows of their altars, may be well satisfied with their skill, and they do not know, poor simpletons! that eighteen centuries ago some fools the colour of an old shoe went them fifteen to one better in the art of earning their bread by exploiting eternal human imbecility.

XXVII

THE RESURRECTED CITY—III

AFTER the Pompeian guide has shown you innumerable establishments in the resurrected city in which nothing but the owners and customers are lacking to complete the illusion of life; after you have seen the beauties of the house of the tragic poet, of that of the vestal virgins, of that of the black wall, of the Grecian epigrams, and have passed through the arena of the amphitheatre, you enter a narrow alley at whose corner the foreign ladies who visit the ruins, guide-book in hand, hesitate in confusion, with a flush suffusing their cheeks.

This alley is the famous street of the Lupanar, which is the principal house of panderage in Pompeii, so amazingly preserved that it seems as if the volcanic ashes instead of destroying it, lovingly protected it so that coming generations might appreciate how far Roman corruption went.

We enter the lupanar, preceded by the guides, a few Germans, and three little Italian curates whose palpitating nostrils become reddened, as if still perceiving the exciting perfume left by the hetæræ as they grazed the walls with their tunics impregnated with aphrodisiac odours.

In the centre of the house is a large room, at whose end the tutelary god of the establishment, Priapus, appears in a painting. On the other stretches of wall, in brilliant colours, are scenes in the nude that make the visitor stand rooted to the ground in amazement, no matter how heedless he may be; the entire show-case, in fine, of all the goods and talent offered by the house.

What a people was that of Pompeii! Those who rail against the never-before-seen corruption of this century ought to take a look at the customs of eighteen centuries ago which are here miraculously revealed. All the brutalities of which one reads to-day with horror in the pages of the court journals, the stupidities and aberrations of pleasure, the description of which is nauseating, were current coin among the youths of Pompeii, the Greek sailors, or the Roman soldiers, who visited these houses of lust centuries ago.

We will pass over the frescoes, as the three priests passed over them—after having gazed at them with upturned eyes for ten minutes.

At the lower end of the waiting room is the marble desk behind which the *proxenetes*, the mistress of the house, collected the money from the customers, and round about it opened the doors of six *cubicula*. There can still be seen the couches of masonry upon which the courtesans laid the famous mat of their profession, which was the couch most appreciated by the imperial Messaline.

On the walls of these dens of carnal brutality, the

inscriptions engraved by the habitués and their obscene drawings can still be seen. Those who lacked money wrote their names on the wall, offering to pay, through fear that Priapus might punish them with impotence in case they should forget. Afterwards they rubbed their names out again, or they did not return, as undoubtedly the history of these shameless ones is lost, as an orator would say, in the tempestuous night of time.

But the most curious thing on this street is the house of the apothecary, located beside the lupanar. Two enormous green serpents entwined about a red background to-day still cover a wall as an unmistakable emblem of the guild of the sellers of plasters. In spite of this sign the young fellows of Pompeii and the people of the port on their way to the brothel at night, with insecure step and beclouded vision, invariably mistook the door, and the good apothecary was compelled to spring from his bed every moment, only to listen to requests for the girls, when he imagined himself called to fill prescriptions. His patience became so tried that finally, above the great serpents, he engraved a concise Latin inscription which, translated, said: "Lazy, night-prowling people, pass on. What you seek is next door. You come here afterwards for the remedy."

No one will deny that this old apothecary was a man of experience.

The thermæ of Pompeii do not have the pornographic decorations which are to be found in the private houses; nevertheless, in its rooms, enveloped in

soft penumbra, in the great marble piscinas, which the sun softly bathes, filtering through the dome, and in the walls covered with bright mosaics, the voluptuousness of that people which professed enthusiastic cult for the nude flesh can be detected. Here gathered the Pompeian beauties, the most virtuous of whom were content, as they stepped out of the bath, to give themselves up to be massaged by the eunuch slaves charged with drying them. Here the poets read their latest works, and the most recent news of the city was made public, converting the rest-rooms into animated periodicals.

The beauty of the thermæ can be compared only to the villa of Diomedes, the Pompeian edifice which is best preserved, and which, on being discovered, revealed all the horrifying magnitude of the final catastrophe.

The atrium contains fourteen columns of marble as transparent as nacre, and from it one descends to the apartments of the slaves and to the bath of the family, which offers on a smaller scale all the conveniences of a public therma.

The central corridor leads to the great hall, in whose centre is the garden with its beautiful statues and fountains of transparent alabaster where streams of water murmur, and round about this diminutive paradise are the bedrooms, the women's apartments, all painted, decorated, seductive, as was characteristic of the dwelling of an opulent Pompeian.

Below the garden is the vaulted cellar, and when the excavations were being carried on, the final tragic

moment was revealed, the supreme agony of the inhabitants of the house, who, either taken unaware, or because they were over-confident, did not escape in time from the invasion of the volcanic ejectamenta. Eighteen bodies were found in one of the openings leading from the cellar, among them that of a young man and a boy (brothers perhaps) who, on realising the proximity of death, united in a close embrace. Here were found loaves of bread, cheeses, eggs, fruits; all of which exist in the museum of Naples as souvenirs of the table of the Pompeians. In the museum of the ruins the bodies appear covered with a coat of plaster in order to prevent their falling to dust, but still revealing, in the positions of their members, their writhing agony. There is the mother, indicating by her bulky abdomen a new life annihilated by the catastrophe before ever having seen the light; the poor children with their arms and legs raised, as if trying to repel the shroud of ashes that was falling upon them; the slaves, rigid, expressionless, as if receiving with indifference a death that freed them from their suffering. A young girl of delicate and graceful form lying on her chest with her face between her crossed arms, as if even in the supreme moment she were thinking of shielding her beautiful eyes from the ashes; and Diomedes, the master of the house, found in the garden with a silver key in his hand, who undoubtedly met his death when, followed by a slave loaded with money and precious objects, he was seeking an avenue of escape in order to save his family and himself.

Of all the tragedies, however, which took place in the bosom of the great catastrophe, and which the pumice has revealed after having concealed them for so many centuries, the most affecting is that of the sentinel who guarded the gate leading to the highway of the tombs.

Upon excavating on that side of the city, within the stone sentry-box, a Roman legionary was found, firm at his post, leaning on his lance, with his shield at his feet and the vizor of his casque drawn over his eyes.

From the place where he stood he had Vesuvius in front of him. He could see the fiery inferno belching from the crest, accompanied by thunder and lightning; the rivers of lava flowing down the sides and creeping toward him; the fleeing people rushing past him, mad with terror; he could see a rain of ashes falling from the heavens that covered first his feet, then his knees, then his breast, and gradually the city was buried; but the orders bade him remain in his place guarding the gate; he could not go until another should come to relieve him, and there he died, even his instinct of self-preservation failing to rebel, forgotten by his chiefs, with the tranquillity of him who fulfills his duty, to rise again from the excavated earth centuries afterward standing firm in his place, calm and serene, like the good Roman legionary that he was.

One can understand that soldiers such as this should have conquered the world.

XXVIII

THE MOUNTAIN OF FIRE—I

OUTSIDE of Pompeii the guide stood waiting for me with the same two hacks we had used before on the excursion along the left bank of the Gulf.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon, the best time for going up Vesuvius and seeing from its heights the setting of the sun behind the green waters of Naples.

The volcano can be ascended in perfect comfort by the funicular railroad. But the ascent loses all its poetry when one is shut up in a car, climbing in a straight line within a few moments a distance that takes over three hours on horseback, by winding trails, not exempt from danger, but offering admirable places from which fine views may be obtained.

We trotted through the streets of Torre Annunziata, a city famous not for its proximity to the volcano, but for its macaroni factories, which are the greatest in Italy; and on passing before its dark portals, one catches glimpses of a tribe of youngsters and of girls with bright-coloured skirts, spreading out upon long frames the golden skeins of tender paste which are destined to be the joy of the restaurants, slipping off the forks of the customers to become entangled in their beards.

Beautiful is the Campagna which surrounds and imprisons the barren, lowering Vesuvius. The fertility of the soil and the deceptiveness of the volcano which, for years at a time, breathes as gently as a child in order to lure its future victims, causes the Neapolitan agriculturist to prefer these fields, in whose depths exists a perpetual summer heat. Murmuring forests of pines fringe the great irrigated regions; the vines wave their tufts of parched red leaves at the end of the shoots entwined about the stock, and groups of little white houses, as if they could find no room in the beautiful plain, climb over the slope of the volcano, like a troop of youngsters that, seeing the giant asleep, audaciously dash up to pull his ears.

When we entered into Boscoreale I marvelled at the daring of these rustics who, because of traditional disregard transmitted from father to son, live in the very throat of the wolf. The imposing mass of the volcano can be seen looming above the roofs with its sides polished and burnished by eruptions. It would be sufficient for Vesuvius to have a mere attack of indigestion, a fit of coughing, and to spit out a little of its red saliva, to instantly wipe out the entire town with a rain of fire.

Boscoreale has already been razed several times; but scarcely do its inhabitants hear the first signs of hoarseness from the throat of the ancient and irascible colossus in whose lap they sleep, no sooner are they warned of danger by the cow lowing in its stable and breaking her ropes, the horse fleeing, whinnying toward

the sea, or the mouse abandoning its hole, than they catch up their fortune of rags and old trumpery, and flee, to return soon afterward to reconstruct the ruins of their dwellings upon a bed of hot ashes; and such a day may come in any year.

Admirable people, who live solely to demonstrate how poverty defies danger, and to rob the traveller! While the horses were enjoying a quarter of an hour's rest at an inn in the little town, the landlady, a veritable old witch, produced the inevitable bottle of Vesuvius wine, and went in search of her daughter to serve it, realising, no doubt, that the merchandise is more appreciated beneath the shade of an attractive bunting.

Famous thieves, beside whom the innkeepers described by Cervantes are sucking babes! They rob while caressing, assuming a humble air, never ceasing to smile. They ask you a lira for a swallow of volcanic wine bitter as beer, so loaded with alcohol that a few moments afterward it sets you to nodding on the back of your horse; and when you protest at the scandalous hold-up, the daughter of the house, with her brilliant bronze face, her forehead festooned by fringes and caracoles sticky with bandoline, and her muscular neck covered by strings of coral, glances at you with her great eyes of ardent lava, and leaves you stupefied by saying that a gentleman ought not to haggle with the poor, especially when one can instantly see that he is a most distinguished person.

Ah, amusing parasites! With what art do you extract money from all who come, *overwhelming him*

with humiliating praises, comparing him to Apollo Belvedere, although he may be a big-paunched Englishman, bow-legged, and the colour of wine! I recall what Musset said about these people who live in the shadow of Vesuvius, and what may be read in the *Recuerdos de Italia,* by Castelar, who complains of the bandits that swarm about the volcano; but I had no idea it could be so bad.

One must come here with open purse to scatter lire to every wind, or else with an ash switch to keep in order this troop of Vesuvianites, who follow no other industry than looting the traveller.

Before reaching the top one passes through the infinite circles of a new Dantesque Inferno where, like souls in pain, the lire are captured, no matter how well one may try to guard them.

One arrives at the White House, an inn which is the nearest human dwelling to the crater, the stopping place of the excursionists where the horses are rested. You defend yourself valorously from the proprietress who threatens your pocket with the before-mentioned bottle of Vesuvian wine, and when you go in search of your horse you find that it is being brought to you by two young swains who seem to have sprung up out of the ground for the sole purpose of extracting a new tip from you.

And you give it, despite everything. You cannot help admiring the cleverness of these little people who break their backs by virtue of so much bowing, who wish you no end of joy, and on the side pray that

when the traveller returns to his homeland he will find his wife and children well, without knowing whether he is a bachelor or a chaplain travelling incognito. While one of the young rascals is holding the reins, the other assists you to mount, and even this operation provides excuses for adulation, for if you are as thin as a cactus-spine they praise your slenderness, the great conquests that undoubtedly you have made; and if you are fat, they say that the gentleman surely eats very well, and that it can be seen a league away that he is nourished with excellent macaroni.

Forward, forward! Far from the innkeepers who loot with their flattery and their incandescent glances, and from vagrants who, when they can lend you no other service, brush off your trousers with one hand and present the other, asking for the *buona mancia!*

The ugly hack, whinnying as if excited by the odour of the lava, giving an occasional nip to the pony of the guide that travels beside him, gallops along through the last of the vineyards imprisoned in the dark slopes of pumice-stone. The pine trees, growing ever more twisted and stunted, are left behind, and we come at last to the true volcanic region, to the immense declivities of pulverised lava, over which the road lies anywhere, and where the horse often sinks into a black sand that, on being crushed, crunches like salt, is as pungent as a handful of needles, and so fine that it sifts in between the seams in the shoes of the rider, making him suffer agonies when he sets foot upon the ground.

Never have I seen such a spectacle as that offered by the sides of the volcano. As the traveller ascends he enters into the silence of great altitudes, which, at Vesuvius, is most gloomy and impressive. Here death has passed over in the form of waves of fire, devouring even the invisible germs that fill the air with vibrations of life. Throwing back the head as if to glance at the sky, one sees the remote crest with the restless tuft of smoke which, in the light of the sun, possesses the white purity of a roll of cotton, and from there downward extend the waves of petrified lava, with darker or lighter colours, according to the date of the eruption, outbursts of igneous torrents, red cascades congealed by time, hills that are confused heaps of black rocks, as if the Cyclops had emptied the iron slag of their gigantic forges there in basketfuls.

While the horses were hurrying across the sheets of black sand, I saw far away, dwindled by the distance, like little figures from a box of toys, some groups of travellers descending from the volcano; my guide, a stout young fellow with a blond moustache, entertained me with his chattering, telling of his adventures during the time when he served his country in a battalion of bersaglieri, and with the end of his whip he pointed out the place in the distance, where his elder brother, who had also been a guide, was crushed to death, flattened into a veritable pancake, beneath a rock weighing some quintales that was expelled by Vesuvius one day during an eruption.

This gloomy, tranquil mountain, within whose

bowels inferno is boiling, possesses a horrifying legend of tragic misfortunes.

While we were painfully making our way up some steep gradients that sounded hollow, as if the crust were about to break into a thousand pieces, vomiting forth a wave of fire, I could not rid my mind of the recollection of poor Silva, a young Brazilian who died there in the crater which is at this moment smoking so gently, as if the broad mouth of death were the modest bonfire of a shepherd.

I met him in Paris, a few months after the Republic had been proclaimed in Brazil. Poor Silva was about my own age, and he had a wife and two children, just as I have now. He was a good boy, learned, energetic, possessed of great republican faith, and with no other fault than that of displaying with a certain childish pleasure, like a true Brazilian, his hands covered with diamonds and a scandalous gold chain across his abdomen.

He had spent from twenty to thirty years writing against the empire of Brazil, making speeches for the republican propaganda, conspiring in union with the antimonarchic military, sometimes fleeing, or again suffering imprisonment for defending his revolutionary ideas.

When the Republic triumphed, Silva, more artist than politician, scorned such positions as that of deputy, or high diplomatic posts, and merely asked his fellow believers for a pension in order that he might travel through Europe, making a special study of Spain and

Italy, countries which attracted him because of the charm of their history.

He left Paris without saying good-bye, without my seeing him. He went to Italy and expected soon to return to the French metropolis. I felt the absence of that companion, of that brother in ideas, with whom so often—sipping beer in the *braseries* of the Latin ward over our pipes—I had in a trice dethroned all the kings of Europe, constituting with the utmost ease the great Universal Federalist Republic. And a month later—I still shudder at the mere thought of it—I saw in the Parisian press the news that this Brazilian republican, on climbing up Vesuvius, either through an error on the part of his guide, or through his own audacity, had reached a place where the ground opened and devoured him between torrents of fire and smoke.

Ironies of fate! To devote his entire life to the realisation of an ideal, to suffer for it punishments and persecutions, and, when finally success had crowned his efforts, when, instead of his poverty-stricken past, he saw a pleasant panorama of ease outspread before him, to come to Europe, urged on by destiny, to die roasted in these bottomless, mysterious abysses!

While my eyes were winking, trying to hold back something that was endeavouring to escape, I thought I could hear, as if it had miraculously glided across the immensity of the ocean, the shriek of horror, the desperate weeping of the young wife, convulsively embracing their two children there on the beautiful shores of Brazil.

XXIX

THE MOUNTAIN OF FIRE—II

AFTER having travelled for an hour and a half across the sandy slopes of the volcano, we gained the region of the hardened lavas, where the horror of the eruptions is revealed in eternal form, the frightful boiling of the torrents of fire.

The horses swept in between gigantic waves of stone with curled crests as if they were about to engulf the traveller. Along the narrow winding paths the spongy stones rolled beneath the horses' feet, falling over precipices whose depth terrifies, and not a bush, not a bird, not even an insect, animated the brown and silent monotony of those accursed regions.

In the presence of the convulsions of the ground, before that sea of lava over whose undulations we puny and insignificant travellers were making our way, the imagination evoked and beheld in all its frightful grandeur the moment of the eruptions. Up there, the crater, like a gigantic torch dissolving the darkness of the night ,thundering like Jehovah on the crest of Sinai, between flaming clouds and deadly vapours, hurling down upon the plain enormous masses of crushing weight that strike fire with their impact; or, descending quietly and treacherously, with an interminable undulation of rings, the red rivers of lava that

engirdle and asphyxiate the towns on the plain, new Laocoöns that struggle in vain to free themselves from the serpents of fire.

During periods of calm, when the volcano sleeps with a gentle snore, exhaling delicate little clouds, and the cold wind from the Gulf converts the igneous torrents into fragile, spongy stone, this desolated landscape, with its enormous boulders, its irregular sinuosities, and its dark colour contrasting with the blue of the sky and the purity of the air, brings to mind the gloomy precipices where the most prodigious bard of the Middle Ages went in search of the seven circles of the Inferno.

As in Doré's fantastic drawings, one seems to see, far away, striding over the black crests, dwindled by distance, but standing out against the limpid sky, the master Virgil, with his white mantle, crowned with laurel, the shining nimbus of glory floating above his forehead, and behind, the ample red cloak of Dante, from whose pointed hood peeps his aquiline nose and his austere forehead furrowed by the wrinkles firmly traced by the misfortunes of his country and by the ingratitude of men.

In the desolate landscape one experiences the terror inspired by those Dantesque tercets; the spirit shrinks; one imagines that from behind each turn of the lava the seven-headed dog will dash out, warning the traveller with its infernal howling that soon there will be found engraved upon the rock the despairing inscription:

"Per me si va fra la cittá dolente . . ."

And as a swift, startling contrast, one needs but tug at the horse's reins, and turn his gaze upon the landscape lying at his back, to burst forth into a cry of amazement.

How describe so much beauty! The Gulf, the immense Gulf, extending its splendrous, undulating mantle out to the open sea! At the foot of the mountain, Torre del Greco, Torre Annunziata, Castellamare, picturesque groups of white houses, with tiny bridges clutching the coasting vessels within their curving stone claws, and the tartans with large lateen sails. At the left, Naples, lying close to the waves, indolently intoning a romance, while the breeze flutters her spangled raiment with its thousand colours, and her complicated necklaces of crystal glitter in the sunlight; the capes Miseno and Massa, piercing the horizon with masses of pink, mottled with shadow; the Gulf, shining like a mirror, dotted with boats gliding like mosquitoes across its surface; the sun which, drawing close to the waters, starts an interminable belt of fishes of fire to fluttering across them; the island of Capri, closing in the Gulf, bearing upon its back white villages, shady forests, pink castles, while it holds in its depths the portentous Blue Grotto; in the last wing, there where the misty blue haze of the open sea mingles with space, Procida and Ischia float like sleeping whales, feeling in their depths the boiling of the convulsions of the earthquake.

The elation of the popular poet, the author of *Funiculí funiculá,* on singing of the beauties to be seen from the heights of Vesuvius, I also felt at that mo-

ment; and, intoxicated by the light and by the colours, as if all the splendrous beauty of the Gulf had invaded our brains, the guide and I, by a strange coincidence, thrilled by the august solitude of the volcano, its dismal echoes, began singing at the top of our lungs that strophe as original and beautiful as the warbling of a bird of passage, in which Neapolitan Bohemia sings the praises of its native land:

"Oh, bella Napoli,
sogno beato
dove si trova
tutto il creato . . ."

And there we stood for more than half an hour, rooted to the spot by the interminable emotion aroused within us by the panorama; and even the poor hacks thrust out their Roman noses with eagerness and gently whinnied, as if the tender seductiveness of the landscape had filtered into their veins.

But the afternoon was drawing to a close and no time must be lost. We resumed the mad gallop along trails and turns where a misstep would have been enough to hurl both horse and rider down abysses where the flesh would be crushed and mangled on the sharp edges of the hardened lava which cuts like a razor; and, after three hours and a half of toilsome climbing, all the time lying over the necks of our steeds which, instead of running, crept like goats, we reached the crater of the volcano.

Imagine a colossal amphitheatre excavated in the summit of a mountain, with its walls smooth and brilliant as a funnel, and a bottom that is concealed behind

the dense layer of vapours that ascend in an immense spiral, and this is the crater. The heat is unbearable; one's face becomes congested, the perspiration oozes from every pore; one is almost asphyxiated each time that he ventures to thrust his head over the edge of the crater; and there in the black floor of the mysterious cauldron one can distinguish the glow of the boiling lava, accompanied by the hair-raising growls emanating from the bowels of the earth. The soles of one's shoes become scorched, burning the feet; it is necessary to be constantly moving in order to prevent the feet from blistering; one hears the earth snoring beneath him, as if at any moment it might shove him down in a terrible outburst of anger, and—why not say it! One experiences as much fear as does the valiant soldier who, on going to the assault, knows that the ground is mined by the enemy and that it may explode at any moment.

There poor Silva died. The guide showed me a horrible slide of the crater, the avalanche of rock that dragged him down, burying him in its depths. It is estimated that over five thousand tons of earth lie above his body. My poor friend! He sleeps like a Pharaoh entombed in the pyramids.

I confess that, once curiosity is satisfied, the crest of Vesuvius does not prove very attractive. The visitor sweats there as in August, and breathes laboriously; he glances enviously at a nearby mountain range whose crests shine like silver, covered with eternal snow, and in the end it becomes impossible to endure the heat penetrating the soles of the shoes, which are about to burst into flame.

I lighted a cigarette merely by thrusting its end between two stones; I glanced for the last time into the infernal funnel, inhaling a mouthful of its sulphurous breath, and we began the descent, only to stop ten minutes farther down at the fountains of lava. Here the Vesuvian pillagers made their appearance again. Just as we were at the most difficult part of that labyrinth of lava masses we met a group of ragged fellows carrying enormous poles. They were the mountain guides, the stretcher-bearers employed by the ladies for making the trip to see the fountains of lava; those who give a hand to the men at the most impassable places.

It was necessary to dismount, and although, for the sake of avoiding tips, I had dismissed the crowd assuring them that I had legs of steel, half a dozen of them followed me with a sarcastic smile, which signified their certainty that I would soon be needing them.

They were not mistaken. It was half an hour's walk over a place where there had never been a path; descents which are veritable leaps over almost vertical declivities, where the sharp sand bites you up to the knee; ascents over the waves of petrified lava, without being able to steady one's self with the hands for fear that the skin will stick to the heated surface; abysses at every step that produce giddiness; enormous rocks through whose fissures the interior fire glows like the inflamed eyes of an infernal being spying upon you in order to clutch you with his claws, and which unexpectedly break, corroded and rendered friable by the internal combustion; and one's fine boots, made for walking along smooth city pavements, rip at every step,

while the sole leaves behind it a trail of tiny strips, licked off by the steely tongues of the lava.

I resisted as long as I could; but at last I was compelled to deliver myself into the hands of my succouring escort as do all other travellers. Two of them grabbed me by the arms, another caught me around the waist, and—up went the bale of goods! In this way, being almost suspended in the air, I reached the confused heap of burning stone, at whose crest rise the fountains of lava. *Cristo!* It was frightful! If one spat, the stone hissed like frying oil; every crack exhaled threads of slender, asphyxiating smoke; the men standing close beside me, and the distant landscape seen through undulating vapour filling all space, seemed to be trembling. It was impossible to keep the feet in the same place for the space of five seconds. The internal fire marked its incandescent bands across the rocks at so little depth that it could be touched with the cane; and a few steps away, slowly, with difficulty, ran the fountains of lava, incandescent earth of a beautiful blood colour, whirling round and round within its bed, wave rolling upon wave.

This is the eternal bleeding of Vesuvius, that which saves it from apoplectic attacks of fire which every now and then shake the territory round about Naples. The fever of destruction escapes through the fountains of lava, cooling before reaching the plain.

It was a marvellous sight; what a pity that the heat of the atmosphere and the burning of the ground produced such an unbearable sense of stifling! But these Vesuvian pillagers have everything prearranged, and

suddenly I saw a white-bearded old man with a basket of bottles appear from behind a great rock, as if vomited out by the lava. He filled a glass with wine while all his brethren in exploitation urged the gentleman to drink to the health of his wife and the children (the decisive touch!), declaring that no more famous place for having a drink could be found throughout the entire world.

Stirred by the recollection of the family in such a place where a mere inclination, a slight fall, would suffice to convert the human body into a polished skeleton, I allowed myself to be seduced, and I drank with the delight of him who is being offered a cool drink inside an oven.

And for one swallow of bad wine I had to pay three pesetas. Afterward, when passing over the worst part of the trail or when upon descending like an inanimate body over the burning precipices, my conductors, taking advantage of the danger of the situation, indicated what I should give them for their services, recalling what the English and Germans who went up Vesuvius gave them. Had I believed them, they would have gotten away even with my shirt.

I kept silence, waiting until we should get back to the horses; I mounted followed by the complicitous guide, who did not open his mouth, for they all stand together in the job of exploiting the traveller, and, to the accompaniment of a general protest, I flung five lire at the whole band. What exclamations, what calls upon the gentlemanliness of the *signore*, what words of courtesy, while they stared at me with the wild eyes

characteristic of the Neapolitan, as if they meant to take advantage of the solitude of the heights to terrify me! But I argued in wretched Italian until I was exhausted; becoming aroused, I resorted to the Spanish vocabulary, and even to the Valencian, with its interminable catalogue of toads and snakes, and when I became wearied of playing the rôle of Don Quixote with that knave of a horse, which, like a good Neapolitan, stood still, waiting no doubt for me to hand out more money, I gave him a few kicks and shot off followed by the maledictions of that crowd that takes every traveller who climbs the mountain for an Englishman.

The afternoon was drawing to a close. The sun, like a sacred wafer of fire, was sinking behind the Gulf surrounded by little clouds of rose and violet. Naples and the coast became wrapped in a delicate golden veil, and long benches of coral seemed to rise from the waters at the caress of the mysterious sunset light.

We started down at random, almost in a straight line in the direction of the coast, which was becoming submerged in the penumbra of twilight, while the crest of the volcano still retained a delicate orange-coloured glow.

In a little more than an hour we descended what had cost us three hours and a half to climb. Night closed in while we were still on the mountain, and I shall always remember that fantastic trip, that horseback ride in the mysterious light of the stars, along trails which were veritable avalanches, over which the horses slipped with feet outspread like frogs, their forelegs

sunk in the sandy lava that rolled along with us, while in order to maintain our equilibrium we had to lean far backward, our spines almost resting on the sweating croup of the steed.

We reached Naples at ten o'clock at night, and the next day I left for Rome, cherishing as a souvenir of the painful expedition glorious and gloomy landscapes in my memory, in my body an impelling sensation of weariness, and in my suitcase a pair of burnt shoes.

XXX

FRANCIS OF ASSISI

AFTER being in Assisi for a few hours I was grateful to the illustrious painter Pepe Benlliure for his wish to have me visit this town. Accorded by the most prominent citizens that consideration merited by so great an artist, and regarded by the children with the affectionate respect inspired by a benefactor, he enjoys as many honours as if he were lord of the city.

To come here is to land, as if by a gigantic leap, into the heart of the Middle Ages.

The emerald waves of luxuriant vegetation spread with infinite undulations over the broad plain of Umbria. Forests of olives, with their masses of pale violet foliage, stand out above the deep green of the meadows; slender cypresses whisper on the banks of the brooklets, which wind like eels made of lustrous tin through the dense verdure; across the blue space of the sky mountains of murky vapour, which, on grazing the lofty Monte Subasio, leave tatters of mist in its folds and on the salients along the flanks of the peaks; and, separated by a distance of a few leagues, seated on the heights with the beautiful valley in the centre, filled with melancholy poesy, its waist oppressed by the ancient girdle of falling walls, and its head crowned by audacious but slowly crumbling

towers, are Assisi and Perugia, the two rivals of the Middle Ages, that still retain, brilliant and glowing, the character of that period, as if centuries had not intervened.

Assisi, with its silent, paved streets fringed with grass, where are to be found more ancient palaces than modern houses, with a population in which curates and friars almost surpass the laity in numbers, recalls Toledo and some other Spanish cities, books of beautiful but moth-eaten bindings, which still exist as an aid to the interpretation of history.

This is the native land of Propertius, the sad Latin poet whose genius found expression only in elegies; here the librettist Metastasio was born, in a modest house where beyond doubt various generations of peasants endured hunger and poverty, until, at last, that elegant abbot was produced who wrote the verses for Mozart's operas; and here appeared one of the most extraordinary men of the Middle Ages, Francis, the son of the rich merchant Pietro Bernardone and his wife Pica, a poet like the others, but who, devoting his inspiration to the humble, to those who suffer, became immortal, achieved the popular title of Saint while yet living, and gave to Assisi eternal fame.

The history of art will not find throughout the whole world so interesting a monument wherein to study the painting of the Middle Ages as the monastery of the Franciscans, with its two great churches erected one above the other.

It was mid-afternoon when, crossing the solitary level space where the convent sinks its mass, we entered

the lower church, receiving full in our faces, as we opened the ancient door, a cool caress laden with the Oriental perfume of incense and with mysterious harmonies floating from the organ.

It is a beautiful church, this of Assisi. When in Spain the art of the Middle Ages was in its infancy and painting was almost unknown, here, in the 13th century, arose this temple, enveloped in an atmosphere of poesy, in the dreamy penumbra possessed by Christianity in the purest of its periods.

The low vaultings, the flat, stout arches, the pilasters heavy as towers, recall the subterranean temples of ancient Egypt. The light infiltrates, dim and mysterious, through these windows as deep as tunnels, assuming all the colours of the complicated glass that, by a strange casualty, exists intact after so many centuries, and in its dim glow one can see an interminable procession of brilliant figures with golden nimbi from the socle to the centre of the vaultings; groups incorrectly drawn, but possessed of ingenuous expressions, in which the brush of the mediæval artists portrayed the principal events of the life of Saint Francis.

This constitutes the most complete history of art, and after the observer has seen the sepulchre of the Queen of Cyprus, and the simple tombs of the first companions of Saint Francis, he examines with delight the frescoes which are like chapters of the wonderful genesis of painting.

There, obscured and cracked by time, are the works of the predecessors of Cimabue, the true father of Italian painting; artists who dreamed theological con-

cepts and surprised the secrets of colour while, in the rest of the world, humanity was concerning itself only with cutting off heads in the name of Jesus or of Mohammed, with the rights of the pope, or with the authority of the emperor. There, the inspiration of the first generations of the Tuscan school, which caught in its palette the same mystic ardour that throbbed in the sermons of the great celibate of Umbria. In the four triangular spaces on the groined vaulting the most notable works in the monument are to be found, the frescoes by Giotto, in which he glorified in allegorical form the poverty, the chastity, and the obedience of the saint, terminating with the glorification of the seraphic order.

Something about these paintings there is that denotes the poet of untrammelled imagination concealed within this artist who was in advance of his time. The symbolism of the four frescoes, mysterious and great, as in the Divine Comedy, cause more amazement than do the drawing and colouring. And the fact is that Dante, a close friend of Giotto, assisted him in conceiving the artistic glorification of the great democrat of the Middle Ages.

The immortal poet aided the painter, giving him the idea of the four frescoes. Giotto, through gratitude, traced in the picture of Chastity the austere figure of Dante, and there is the singer of the Inferno kneeling at the feet of Saint Francis, covered with his great cloak, whose pointed hood hangs down almost to his heels.

The influence exercised over his period and over the

two or three centuries following, by the ascetic poet, is amazing. Truly, Saint Francis, when studied in detail, obsesses the most heedless mind, and only in Jesus is a figure worthy of comparison to be found. A rationalist, the notable French theologian and historian Paul Sabatier, spent over half a year at Assisi searching the archives, studying the places where the ascetic lived, in order to write a book in which the life of this figure that in other works is obscured by absurd miracles, should be revealed in all his greatness as a man. Those who succeeded in penetrating the life of the saint, despoiling him of his sainthood and picturing him as a man, are the ones who better depict this interesting personality.

One day the son of the wealthy merchant Pietro Bernardone, who had spent his youth in pleasure, and who had fought as a valorous soldier in the war against Perugia, became inflamed by the fire of charity, suffered remorse upon seeing that while he was surrounded by joys and abundance, others, who were his fellow men, were perishing with hunger; and, standing in the centre of the public square of Assisi, he stripped off his purple robe, made tatters of his fine undergarments, and stood naked before the scandalised multitude, vowing to God that he would never dress himself again as long as there should exist poor who lacked shelter for their shivering bodies. What a beautiful beginning! Afterward, barefooted, with no other clothing than a coarse robe like that of the peasants, which the bishop compelled him to wear for the sake of decency, he journeyed wherever he might find opportunity to relieve

human suffering, wherever he could take up the defence of the weak and the helpless.

The region was infested with bandits. Francis went in search of them, and he who a short time before had been a man of the sword suffered with the most sublime resignation, only, in exchange for his counsels, to be beaten and thrown over precipices. He presented himself before the fierce barons, who, clad in iron, looted the defenceless villagers, and he spoke to them in the name of God, who is ever on the side of the poor and weak. Round about his hut, in the valley of the Portiuncula, arose other shelters, beneath which men came to dwell who, filled with enthusiasm by the ascetic, forsook fortune and family, feeling the necessity, in a period of barbarity and tyranny, of creating a militia that, with no other weapons than persuasion and passivity, should protect the unfortunate and the oppressed; and late in the day, when in the melancholy light of the declining sun, the peasants of Umbria would load their carts and prepare to start on the way accompanied by the strains of the Panpipe, they would see a small company of phantoms, extenuated by maceration, coming toward them, animated corpses, wearing grey sacks for shrouds, who aided them in their tasks without receiving any remuneration whatever, asking only that while bending their fleshless forms over the grain, tortured by the irritating fibres of the hair shirt, they might be allowed to speak of God; and they talked of Him in a poetic language that touched the soul and that possessed the sweet inflections of the nightingale that warbles in the forests of the neigh-

bouring mountains. Francis, who was not a priest, nor possessed of any other science than that of composing beautiful verses, obtained permission to preach in the cathedral of Assisi. The sunlight filtering through the tall windows girdled with a nimbus of light the slender head whose skin possessed the white transparency of nacre, and on which a thin blond beard shone with the brilliancy of a golden skein. The multitude felt the ardour of those words of fire that glorified poverty and love for one's fellows. The souls rose and rose, following the uplifting of the fleshless arms that emerged from the coarse sleeves of the robe; and Clara, the daughter of a patrician family, who, with her blue eyes and her blond hair was adored by all the young people of Assisi, felt kindled in her breast the adoration inspired in women by heroes and martyrs. That same night, like an audacious maid going out to meet her lover, she went in search of the ascetic. The stars were twinkling above the little valley of the Portiuncula, as if they could hear the colloquy of the two mystics who talked of God without hearing the voice of the flesh aroused by nocturnal voluptuousness. He, standing erect, pointing out with his emaciated hands the vast immensity where exists the future dwelling of souls; she, at his feet, filled with emotion, sighing, enveloping him in a tender glance of adoration; and some days afterward, on the night of Palm Sunday, when the bells were ringing in the darkness, and the plebeians of the valley lay tossing on their mats, dreaming of witches and of sorcery, the companions of Saint Francis made their way down to the Portiuncula with flaming

torches, like a procession of phantoms disturbing the calm of night with loud prayers, and the young maiden received the veil and was admitted into the glorious legion of the defenders of poverty.

The mystic marriage was complete. Below, Santa Clara, surrounded by young girls who followed her example; above, in the dark caves of the heights of Subasio, Saint Francis, in pious immobility, like an Indian fakir, spending whole weeks without eating, and overcoming his inertia only in order to fly to the assistance of the unfortunate.

All the mystic poesy of the Middle Ages is found in this sublime visionary. When he stepped from his damp cave he beheld the tree which leaned over the abyss filled with singing and warbling birds, and, with the mania for soliloquy suffered by the solitary, he preached to the little mountain birds that hopped round about his inoffensive person; he praised their errant felicity, which makes it unnecessary for them to give heed, as does man, to food and clothing, and which gives them the purity of one who does not need to exploit and to sacrifice his fellow man in order to live. Occasionally he would make his way down to the plain to see his disciple, almost blinded by the heat of summer, leaning on his rude staff, feeling his way over terrifying declivities, and, in the tiny garden of the convent, in the presence of the silent nuns and the gentle Clara, who looked upon him with admiration and approached him as if to inhale a perfume of sanctity, he would recite his most recent poem, the Song to the Sun; and while he was exalting the divine lumi-

nary, its ardent rays once again burned his inflamed and reddened eyelids.

Great and generous soul, tormented at every moment by the vision of social inequality, by the voluntary misery in which the majority of humanity laments! He was born during the period in which an endeavour was made to solve the most difficult of problems by means of charity and religion, and he became a saint endeavouring to convince the powerful by the example of sacrifice. Had he existed in these times, when humanity, doubting the efficacy of religion, trusts only to science, Saint Francis would have been a revolutionist, and who knows but he would have sought universal regeneration through the baptism of fire!

"Take not either silver or gold," he said to his followers; "do not carry money in your purse; do not receive earthly goods, nor accept honours or hierarchies; do not possess shoes, neither two tunics, for that which most honours the worthy man is his nakedness."

Scarcely had he died than he was canonised, and temples were built in his honour; but his successors made good haste to accept mitres and cardinals' hats at the hands of the papacy, which was alarmed by the democratic theories of Francis; and in the last century the Order possessed throughout the world nine thousand monasteries, one hundred and fifty thousand members, and uncounted millions in property.

The most pitiful thing concerning these holy figures who sacrificed themselves combating human inequality is the futility of their work.

Poor martyrs, exploited by your successors, and falsified by the credulous vulgar! Francis endured the greater part of his sufferings to create a militia that would battle for the poor, and it resulted in his leaving above his tomb nothing but a structure on which to erect the offices of bishops and cardinals. Jesus died on Golgotha for universal fraternity because of human inequality, but in His name thousands of persons were devoured by the flames of the Inquisition; the people who rebelled against the Pontificate were put to death; and those who dwell surrounded by lances and bayonets, those who are carried on litters with Oriental pomp through the interior of the most superb of palaces, and who present the toe of a slipper for the kiss of the faithful, call themselves the heirs of the God of Humility.

XXXI

THE CITY OF FLOWERS

FROM Rome to Florence travellers who go direct admire at noon the beauty of Lake Trasimeno; a vast expanse of green water boxed in between rose-coloured mountains along whose slopes climb squadrons of pines.

Lake Trasimeno presents an agreeable appearance with its dead, smooth, glistening waters, over which glide the big ferry-boats with their round awnings, its shores now low, or again with steep and rocky promontories covered with mediæval castles that seem to have been torn from the illustrations of a romantic novel.

Yet, notwithstanding the alluring appearance of this landscape which resembles a picture painted on a fan in which the predominant tints are pink and blue, the imagination, stimulated by the recollections evoked by the name of the lake, brusquely looks back upon the past, leaping over twenty-two centuries, and sees the immense pond as it was during the time of the Second Punic War, when the balance between Rome and Carthage was still undecided, and fate seemed to favour the African warrior who had taken a vow of eternal hatred against the Romans in the halting voice of a boy.

On the shores of this lake, along which to-day stroll

the English or the Germans who come during the winter in search of southern warmth, blood once ran in torrents until it reddened the tranquil waters, and thousands of men exterminated one another with the savage fury of battles in which the sword was everything and hand-to-hand struggle determined the victory. Here, trumpeting with rage, Hannibal's elephants, their trunks trembling with fury and their round feet bespattered with scraps of bleeding flesh, routed the legions of Rome with their galloping, crushing armour, bursting the chests of the fallen with a hideous crunching, until only a repugnant mass of tendonless muscles, bits of iron and coagulated blood remained upon the soil; here, the Carthaginian army, in which fought people of every nation except Carthaginians, humbled the Roman power, thanks to the genius of that Napoleon of the ancient world who for the first time accomplished the marvel of crossing the Alps. The Balearic slingers, naked, half savage, with no clothing save a hat of bark, with a strip of leather over their loins, defeated the greatest army in the world with their stones; the valiant Iberians, with long swords and with shields of bull's hide, broke up the invincible Roman cavalry; the standards of the haughty Senate, the golden eagles, the she-wolves of greenish bronze, rolled in the mud; the fugitives spread terror throughout the great city, and the patricians dragged themselves moaning over the flagstones of the temple of Mars, vainly beseeching the god for a miracle, while from moment to moment they feared the arrival of the ferocious conquerors.

These shores of Trasimeno, with their flower-dotted green fields, are impregnated with the blood of that war in which the destiny of the world was decided: Rome or Carthage! And the future, which is an interminable irony, allowed half of humanity to be extinguished, only to settle the problem tranquilly later on, obliterating even the ruins of Carthage, and suffering all-conquering Rome to fall in her turn beneath the sharp axes of the hordes vomited from the obscurity of the North, whom the Romans called barbarians, as a designation of supreme scorn.

But let us leave the tragic Trasimeno, as the train draws away, running through the fertile valleys of Tuscany.

We are approaching Florence, the Athens of Italy, the cradle of the Renaissance, the amazing incubator of genius, which in the course of a century produced innumerable men any one of whom would have sufficed by himself to make an epoch immortal.

The Arno, that river which Dante in his exile saw with the eyes of illusion, glides and winds its way between the mountains. The lovely panoramas where the poets of the Florentine school found inspiration pass with giddy rapidity; the villas of filigree-like architecture glow against the green background with the lustre of marble, still seeming to reflect the great Medici and his court of savants and artists discussing the Grecian culture which had begun to revive; and on the pink-flushed hills whisper luxuriant groves, like those that sheltered the gay parties of ladies and pages before whom Giovanni Boccaccio recited the jovial

tales of the *Decameron* in order to make them forget the plague, while his malicious, faun-like profile contracted in a crafty smile.

The entrance to Florence is most beautiful. The station resembles a cathedral with ogival arcades and stained-glass windows. The traveller crosses the waiting room, and suddenly finds himself assaulted by a group of ladies, parasol on wrist, hat in the latest style, and a beautiful basket on the arm, who, smiling in the most charming manner, decorate his lapels and even the opening of his pockets with flowers and bouquets of every variety and colour. They are the famous flower girls of Florence, as elegant as duchesses. Impossible to resist them! At the slightest offer to return their flowers they flee like a swarm of butterflies, and, after taking a few steps, they return and flutter around you, always smiling, asking nothing, with glances that so flatter one's self-conceit that, at last, just before you step into the omnibus, they accept with a salutation of courtesy and gratitude the four-sous piece that you give them with a feeling of shame, fearing lest such beautiful lips will accuse you of stinginess.

This is the industry of hundreds of young women, who, by means of smiles, fondling of lapels, and fleeing at the slightest protest, earn the silver for their macaroni by presenting flowers, which here possess no value. And the skinny English lady with frosty hair, and the oily German woman with sonorous tread, flush as they step out of the train, amazed at the pertness and the light-hearted frankness with which these Florentine

butterflies assault and handle their stiff husbands, whose ears grow redder every moment.

After having rolled along the streets of Florence for a few moments, one feels in his spirit the artistic emotion so often anticipated when fingering the pages of the history of this city, which rivals Rome in its glories.

The Middle Ages and the Renaissance still exist within it. On the outskirts are modern streets, broad boulevards with palaces built on contract, that resemble bonbon boxes, and even the statue of Victor Emmanuel, that eternal figure of a big-bellied cook dressed as a general, which is to be found in every village of Italy; but the city in its ancient part is almost exactly as it was when the Guelphs and Ghibillines were dressing one another's hides over the question whether the Pope were more worthy than the Emperor, or vice versa.

Palaces of the ancient Florentine nobility are to be found in every street: gigantic dice of toasted stone, flanked by slender turrets, and perforated by a triple row of oval windows divided by an airy column.

Within exist evidences of luxury and ease; the vast saloons, with their gilded ceilings and green marble pavements, their walls covered with frescoes and their corners crammed with works of art in which the chisel of Cellini or Donatello resurrected the beauty of paganism with an interminable cortège of nymphs and satyrs, nereids and tritons. The exterior is one of frowning hostility, of threatening gravity; the façade converted into a fortress, the door as thick as that of

a castle; the windows high, so that the ladders of the assailants cannot reach them; the towers with loopholes through which to thrust the black mouth of the arquebuses; and the eaves with vomitories, for hurling down the flaming resin or the boiling lead upon the mutinous rabble. The row of carved staples upon the walls of the palaces which sustained the torches on nights of feasting or dancing may still be seen; but the façades also reveal the holes and other evidences of havoc wrought by the assaults. Upon these books of stone, which will stand for many centuries yet to come, may still be read the history of the seditious Florentine nobility, divided into two bands, which interrupted the High Mass in Santa Maria del Fiore and upset the chalice in order to thrust their poniards into the Medici brothers, or attended the balls wearing their armour beneath their silken togas so that when the festivity was at its height they might draw their swords and baptise the conspiracy with blood.

This is the most beautiful city in the world, and that which has the most crimes concealed within its palaces, those portentous works of art. Of all her illustrious sons the most legitimate is Machiavelli, who, like his city, conceals behind the seductive smile of the diplomat the most atrocious thoughts.

A united Florence never existed. From the earliest centuries of the Middle Ages it appears divided, and a continual rise and fall of the balance through the elevation of one party by the ruin of the other, constitutes its entire history. First there was an interminable series of counts, marquises, and dukes, who dis-

puted the seigniory of the city, causing the imbecile populace to break one another's heads in defence of their private personal interests. Then the Countess Matilda, who felt such adoration for the sanctity of the Pope that she slept in his room, presented Tuscany to the Papacy; and as this country was a feud of the empire, the question arose between the two Powers that lasted for the trifling period of three centuries, with its consequent accompaniment of beheadings *en masse,* strings of men on the gallows, and frightful excommunications which, although they cause laughter to-day, in those times spoiled the appetite of the most valiant. Finally, when the Ghibellines triumphed, they became bored at finding themselves in a blessed state of peace, and in order to while away the time they divided themselves into Blacks and Whites, and then they turned green regaling one another with clubbings in the streets of Florence or in the Tuscan plains.

It seems almost a miracle that Florence has been able, not merely to exist, but to maintain her position as the emporium of Italian culture despite the sanguinary adventures and vengeful revolutions lasting for centuries and then for more centuries. If the Guelphs triumphed their first occupation was to raze the palaces of the conquered, lay waste their gardens, behead all those upon whom they could lay hands; and, then, when the Ghibellines who were in exile managed in their turn to triumph, in order not to be outdone, they repeated the same operation. The city was in perpetual revolt, and those who managed to keep free of the gallows, or from one of the famous

Florentine stabbing affrays, were compelled to emigrate innumerable times, and they considered that dying in bed was a rare privilege reserved only for friars and bishops.

When the power passed into the hands of the people, in the 14th century, the Florentine Republic being proclaimed, a state of tranquillity reappeared. But then a new danger began slowly to develop through the fabulous riches of the family of the Medici, those astute merchants who proposed to make themselves kings through exploitation of the people as they had exploited their clients. First the Gonfalonier Sylvester, fighting in the cause of the people; then Giovanni, who flattered the populace with his riches until he succeeded in getting them to entitle him the chief of the citizens; next came Cosimo, whom they called the father of the country, a hypocrite of the highest order, who, pretending humility, managed to govern the Republic for thirty years as absolute king, without the slightest protest; and then Lorenzo the Magnificent, who, surrounding himself with the greatest savants and artists in the world, blinded the beauty-loving people with the splendrous rays of art, while he assured the future of his family, converting a simple republican magistracy into a hereditary sovereignty.

When the people became convinced that they were wearing chains which, although of gold, enslaved them nevertheless, it was too late. The dagger of the conspiracy of the Pazzi arose above the Medici; blood ran, but the seed of the ambitious family remained. Then appeared Savonarola, that republican soul, mak-

ing use of the Gospel as a revolutionary weapon; but his triumph was ephemeral, and the exhorting friar perished at the stake. Siena was the last city of Tuscany to serve the Republic as a bulwark, but the adventurous scoria of the entire world came to swell the armies of the Medici, and Siena fell spiritless upon her embossed shield, wiping out with blood the beautiful motto graven in gold upon a blue field: "Libertas."

The most amazing thing is that during so interminable a period of wars and revolutions, of extermination and desolation, when the Florentines were compelled to think from morning to night of means for keeping their heads whole, this city was able to produce the most famous men of the world.

From this soil, ever in convulsion, like the crest of a volcano, sprang Cimabue and Giotto, fathers of painting, who produced famous pictures while the rest of the world was not even familiar with drawing; architects like Orcagna and Brunelleschi; sculptors and carvers like Niccola Pisano, Benvenuto Cellini, and Donatello; a novelist, Boccaccio; a famous historian, Guicciardini; a mariner whose name became immortal, Amerigo Vespucci; and a Mephistopheles of diplomacy, Machiavelli, who, writing his book *Il Principe,* sanctioned for his epoch the most sanguinary ironies.

And, by way of prodigious personages, closing this brilliant procession of great men, there still remain Dante, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Galileo, four Florentines who were born in the alleys of the

ancient city, who raced through them as boys like any other young rascals, while no one divined that in years to come, in order to worthily salute their immortal names, we ought to remove our craniums instead of our hats.

XXXII

THE PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA

I LEFT the Pagliana theatre after hearing Puccini's *La Bohème,* obsessed by the tender accents of the poet Rudolph, when he sees the gentle Mimi dying in his arms, and as I reached the vestibule I was surprised by the livid glow of a lightning flash.

A storm was hurling its fury upon sleeping Florence. Before the light sprinkle should become converted into a shower I started in the direction of the hotel along the intricate network of narrow streets, illuminated, not so much by the dim gaslight as by the bluish resplendence which intermittently invaded the darkness of space with an accompaniment like a frightful clattering of boards.

This was my first night in Florence, and while making my way through the unfamiliar and deserted streets, beaten by the rain, blinded by the lightning flashes, giving more heed to sheltering myself from the broad eaves than to the configuration of the streets, it resulted naturally in my losing my way.

Suddenly I saw a broad, dark space, in which half a dozen reflectors shone with the opaque glimmer of lost stars; through the wet mist I could make out something gigantic that rose and rose, closing in the lower end of the square, until suddenly the sky became

lighted with a violet flame, and in the instantaneous glow, as if in the panorama of a magic lantern, I saw the famous Piazza della Signoria, the most beautiful sight in Florence.

Puccini's *La Bohème* is beautiful, but that famous square seen in the fantastic light of a storm, constitutes an unexpected vision, worthy of being paid for more dearly than the finest of operas.

I forgot the water that was beating on my neck, the streaming eaves, the gargoyles that spat through their great stone mouths the filthy water of the roofs. It was thundering with a noise as if the city were being razed to the ground, or as if up there the Guelphs and the Ghibellines were still carrying on their fight; the flashes of lightning were so strong and dazzling that, instead of coming from the sky, they seemed to be issuing from the great flags of the square like infernal mouthfuls of sulphur; each exhalation seemed to wrest the air from one's lungs, but despite all this, the brief moments of darkness seemed interminable, creating a desire that the fantastic glow which caused the most portentous beauties to surge from the shadow should shine continuously.

Near the loggia designed by Orcagna the colossal fountain of Hercules rises in the same place where Savonarola was burned. A short distance away Cosimo de' Medici, erect on his bronze horse, like a god of Walhalla sung by Wagner, which the storm had vomited into the centre of the square between two thunder claps. At the lower end the Palazzo Vecchio, a superb construction dating from the 13th century,

breathing the gloomy fierceness of the Florentine republicans: a quadrangular mass with a triple row of round windows, tipped by a salient angle crowned by turrets, and displaying by way of a crest a tower seventy meters high, so audacious, so slender, that it resembled a stone knife cleaving the sky.

There I stood I know not how long, as if each exhalation were a hammer stroke that nailed me to the spot, taking refuge beneath the arcades of Orcagna, in the agreeable company of those white or green giants which the glow of the lightning flashes caused to emerge from the darkness: athletes with swollen muscles making off with the nude Sabine women across their shoulders; the handsome Perseus, cutlass in hand, holding aloft the terrifying head of Medusa; Hercules slaying the crafty, thieving Cacus and crushing the Centaur beneath his powerful mace; and in the meantime the thunder was rolling throughout space, as if Dante were strolling aloft, reciting his sonorous tercets to the Eternal Father.

I felt the rain trickling in between my flesh and my skin, but the company was so delightful that I could not leave it. In that darkness, listening to the hoarse peals of the bells of Santa Maria del Fiori which was striking midnight, having taken refuge in a loggia where the magistrates of the Republic convoked the people at critical moments, I came to imagine myself one of those Florentines with their embroidered dalmatics, red breeches, and plume erect in their caps, who, dagger in hand, slunk in the shadows awaiting the moment for liberating the *patria* with an unerring

thrust. The people passing swiftly through the square, their hoods drawn over their heads, bound for their domestic roofs, seemed to me to be the divine poet himself returning with circumspection from some mysterious conspiracy against the Ghibellines, or Michelangelo in his youth returning to his cottage after a session of study in the cemetery over the opened corpses; even the great fountain disappeared, and the glow of the lightning flashes was the first flicker of the bonfire above which Savonarola, bound to the stake, glanced with eyes of gentle reproach at the indifferent multitude that but a few days before had acclaimed him as its idol.

Ah, the recollection of my first night in Florence will not easily fade from my memory! The friendships I made were too good to be forgotten. I became submerged in the past, and in the darkness I even felt the grazing of the flowing robes of the great artists of the Renaissance. The next day I rushed to the Piazza della Signoria in order to see in the daylight those which the night before had been spectres of the storm. There was the famous loggia, which some call that of the lancers, and others that of Orcagna, with its two lions on the steps, who lacked nothing but a growl to complete the miracle achieved by Grecian sculpture; a short distance away, *Ajax and Achilles,* and *Germania Devicta,* famous works of ancient art restored by Michelangelo; the *Rape of the Sabines,* by Giovanni da Bologna; the *Perseus* by Cellini, with its pedestal of marvellous reliefs, which are the glories of the uncanny Benvenuto, as skilled in art as in trans-

mitting lies and boasts in his stupendous *Memorias;* and *Judith and Holophernes* by Donatello, an allegorical sculpture commemorating the fall of the Duke of Athens, one of the tyrants of the city.

I entered the Palazzo Vecchio, running through its vast saloons in which a Medici obliterated the recollections of the conquered Republic in order that Vasari might perpetuate the glories of the family in colossal frescoes.

Here is the saloon with its tapestries sketched by Bronzino, and its doors of intricate design, sculptured by Donatello, where the Council of Two Hundred convened; the Chamber of the Eighty, where once existed the famous clock that marked the course of the planets; and finally the room of the great Council, recalling the best period of the Republic; the vast hall called the chamber of the Five Hundred, which Savonarola had built for the purpose of holding large popular concourses, during the period in which the Dominican revolutionists, taking advantage of the simplicity of Piero de' Medici, the heir of Lorenzo the Magnifiicent, endeavoured to resuscitate the lost liberties.

A strange and incomprehensible figure is that of the famous friar. In the monastery of San Marcos, where repose the ashes of Fra Angelico, the artist who succeeded in giving form and colour to mystic dreams, I saw the cell of Savonarola and his portrait, the pompous profile of a stirring and convincing orator peeping out from the opening of his hood.

He was a living contradiction. He believed blindly

in the miracles of Christian legend; he was at the point of submitting himself to the barbarous proof of the Judgment of God, passing, sacrament in hand, through the flames of an enormous bonfire, trusting that the flames would respect him on seeing him in such good company, and at the same time he interpreted as a tribune the revolutionary spirit of the Gospel; he was, without realising it, a precursor of the reform, and he preached democratic doctrine to the great scandal of the popes, who were in their most brilliant epoch of hauteur, opulence, and extravagance.

His oratory must have been like fire, since he accomplished the amazing miracle of inflaming the imagination of a whole people within a few days. His ideal was poverty reduced to a system; socialism reversed, which, instead of elevating the disinherited so that they should enjoy all the good things of the world, should undertake to attack the happy, levelling the whole world vigorously with equality of poverty. He clothed his body in a coarse habit; the procession and the hymn were his sole recreation; eternal war against riches and against beauty which corrupt the soul; and the people free and poor, with no other lord than the One in the skies. That was his ideal.

A most beautiful aspiration, did there not exist that which is called art, and which is the product of the adoration of many generations in the presence of beauty!

The Florence of the coarse tales, of the scandalous adventures, of the wild orgies, of the amorous serenades, allowed itself to be led by the fervid oratory

of the tribune. The mystic Republic, with its absolute equality of poverty, was acclaimed by the Florentine beauties, who ceased to paint their cheeks and exchanged their low-necked 15th century gowns for coarse robes. The gay young people whose sole occupation had been twanging the mandolin and fencing, concealed their gay-coloured trousers and their emblazoned surcoats beneath the habit of a penitent; and sadly confusing art with luxury in response to the voice of the Dominican who preached the extermination of riches, all Florence hurled into the flames, in the centre of the Piazza della Signoria, the carved chests, the jewels of gorgeous design, and the statues whose classic nakedness brought a flush to the face of that impressionable people who, like the devil in our refrain, "after having stuffed himself with flesh, became a friar."

Eternal execration upon those who sent Savonarola to the stake! But, if they had put off burning him a little longer, the exalted Dominican would have converted Florence into a new Thebaid, not leaving in it a single work of art.

Therefore, in the presence of the complicated character of Savonarola, one must say, recalling a famous apostrophe: "As a republican I admire you; as an artist I abjure you."

XXXIII

THE ITALIAN ATHENS

NEEDLESS to say, the principal attractions of Italy are its museums, in which the great works of art are gathered together in overwhelming profusion, not alone those of the Italian masters, but those of the most famous artists of the world.

Italy, even during her periods of greatest decadence, when she was the eternal fief of all the nations, enjoyed fame and respect because of her artistic treasures, because of her amazing galleries.

I have seen the Vatican museum, the Capitoline, the Royal Gallery of Naples; interminable palaces which contain the most glorious productions of genius; I thought that after these museums, which require a whole day to be seen even hastily, there could no longer be anything in Italy to be compared with them, but I have just left the Galleria degli Uffizi in a state of amazement, after having spent seven hours on my feet, giving merely a hurried glance at pictures and drawings, going from one hall to another, and seeing ever in the distance new doors and extensive corridors that convert this monument of art into one of those palaces of the *Thousand and One Nights,* the end of which could never be found.

How describe everything seen in the portentous gal-

lery! After having been in it for a few hours one's brain becomes dazed; Fra Angelico dances within one's cranium in dizzy confusion with Rubens, Raphael with Teniers; Tintoretto with Velázquez, Titian with Murillo, and how do I know how many other artists! For not a single great master has existed anywhere in the world who is not here represented.

It seems incredible that a people which was not a nation of conquerors and had no opportunity to rob other nations by force of arms, has been able to gather together such an accumulation of famous works. The family of the Medici well knew how to utilise their colossal fortune, and the Florentine patriciate considered the protection of the arts one of the most refined of graces.

Therefore the history of the painting of the entire world can be studied in the Galleria degli Uffizi merely by visiting it five or six hours daily for three or four months. The excessive profusion of beauty finally overwhelms, produces vertigo, beclouds the vision; and when, after a pilgrimage through the saloons, which sometimes open their windows upon the Arno, or again upon courtyards with columns, at last one arrives at the saloon of honour, one's admiration and enthusiasm have already become exhausted. The eyes, intoxicated by colour and by line, can no longer distinguish the notable from the eminent, and you become wearied in the presence of the *Venus of Cleomenes,* called the Medici Venus; the valiant *Group of the Wrestlers;* the graceful *Faun* of Praxiteles; and the *Saint Jerome* by Ribera; the *Samian Sibyl* by Guercino; the *Madonna*

by Perugino; the *Maria de la Rovere* by Baroccio; the *Jean de Montfort* by Van Dyck; the *Holy Family* by Michelangelo; the *Venus* by Raphael; and the *Bacchant* by Titian; precious jewels of this interminable storehouse of prodigies.

As if to enhance the value of this museum, it possesses two specialties that make it famous: a collection of portraits of renowned artists painted by themselves, and the bagatelle of two thousand eight hundred drawings, sketches, and designs, signed with the most famous names. There, on cracked cardboard, or on paper yellowed by the centuries, are both the light sketch by Albert Dürer and the landscape by the bucolic Watteau. From the 14th century to the 18th, there is not an artist of merit who has not a drawing in Florence signed with his name. Between the folds of coarse dark-coloured paper are the sketches of the muscular statues, and the plans of monuments worked out by Michelangelo, Murillo, Ribera, and Velázquez have their brilliant representation in the vitrines; and in the presence of the interminable series of drawings the observer experiences the same strange curiosity as is aroused by the obscure origins of a Shakespeare or a Napoleon. These figures, lightly outlined, carelessly traced, were soon afterward converted into famous works; they represent the nucleus of the grandiose frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, or of paintings whose price is incalculable.

Another famous monument of Florence is the Cathedral (Santa Maria del Fiori), similar in its construction to that of Pisa, standing in the centre of the square

and forming three separate edifices, the Cathedral, the Campanile, and the Baptistery.

When, in the 13th century, the Council of the Seigniory ordered this construction it was stated in the decree, in the name of the Florentine people, that the work must possess "such tall and sumptuous magnificence that neither the industry nor the power of man can surpass it in size or in beauty," and their desire came very near being fulfilled.

For splendrous beauty appealing to the eye there exists nothing to surpass the Florentine temple, which is built of coloured marble from base to roof, with its elegant tower covered by brilliant slabs, green, white, and red, rising into blue space with the slenderness of a spray of luminous water.

With the statement that all the famous artists of Florence (an interminable catalogue) have left some of their handiwork in this church, no more need be said. The doors of the Baptistery, with their reliefs by Ghiberti, which represent divers scenes in the life of John the Baptist, are so beautiful that Michelangelo, with the frankness of the artist who towers above rivalry and envy, declared they deserved to be the doors of Paradise.

In one of the naves, set into the wall, are the sepulchres of Giotto and Brunelleschi, and scattered through the temple there exist by dozens, in sculpture and in painting, works by Donatello, Ghiberti, Luca della Robbia, Niccolò d'Arezzo, and that great Michelangelo who left something in all the public buildings of Florence, and with whom, by reason of meeting him at

every step, the traveller finally becomes familiar, addressing him as "thou," like an intimate friend.

San Lorenzo is the Escorial of Florence. The Medici wished to perpetuate the glory of the family with a sumptuous tomb that should recall their wealth and power, and they ordered the construction of the Chapel of the Princes by Michelangelo, who had time to build only what is called the *Sagrestia Nuova.*

The richness of this Cappella dei Principi, or Chapel of the Princes, is amazing. The pavement, the walls, the circular dome, everything, is of green marble, of porphyry, of bronze, with incrustations of lapis lazuli. It suffices to say that its cost is estimated at the trifle of twenty-two millions of pesetas, or four million four hundred thousand dollars.

The last of the Medici, the descendants of the merchant Cosimo, who had placed upon their forehead the crown of sovereign princes, appear proudly in their golden armour, sceptre in hand, their flowery mantles flowing down to their feet, above the carved sarcophagi of precious stone containing their remains.

Nevertheless, the dazzling richness of the Chapel, which overwhelms one with its magnificence, fails to deter the visitor from immediately going in search of the *Sagrestia Nuova,* a place with no other adornment than a simple Roman decoration.

There is the beautiful of the beautiful, the great of the great; the most famous of the works of that Florentine genius, architect, painter, sculptor, and poet, of whom one cannot understand how he had time and leisure to achieve so many portentous deeds. Michel-

angelo, who, notwithstanding his fiery disposition, always maintained pleasant relations with Leo X (no doubt because the Pope understood how to put up with his whims) wished to outdo himself in carving the tombs of the relatives of the Pope, and he accomplished two miracles in the two mausoleums which occupy the Sacristy.

On one side is Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, dressed as a Roman, seated in a chair, with such an expression of absorption on his countenance that the statue is known throughout the world of art by the title of *Il Penseroso;* at his feet are *Evening* and *Dawn;* and opposite this monument is that of Giuliano de' Medici, Duc de Nemours, brother of Leo X, which has on its base the symbolic figures of *Day* and *Night.*

It is impossible to carry to a greater height the art of reproducing life in marble. They are animate figures; one expects that their robust chests will expand with a sigh, and even imagines that he sees the blood circulating through the heavy veins that swell the marble with vigorous relief.

Night is the most astounding of the symbolic figures. A nude woman, of solemn and gloomy beauty, who is actually sleeping, for it seems as if through her half open lips the regular respiration of a tranquil sleep were about to escape.

The poet Strozzi, who was a warm friend of the artist, dedicated a sonnet to him, in which he begged the sculptor to call to the sleeping woman, with the certainty that she would awake, a living being.

But Michelangelo, who, during his hours of leisure,

gave sway to the poetic muse, and who, despite his continual contact with popes and princes, was a republican and lamented the lost liberty of Florence, instead of awakening his statue, replied to Strozzi with another sonnet:

> "Ah! glad am I to sleep in stone, while woe
> And dire disgrace rage unreproved near—
> A happy chance to neither see nor hear.
> So wake me not! When passing, whisper low."

Thus he counsels Strozzi not to think of awakening the statue of *Night,* since it is better to sleep the sleep of death than to live only to witness deceit triumphant and liberty lost.

XXXIV

THE QUEEN OF THE LAGOONS

I BADE a final farewell to beautiful Florence; to the small, dingy house where Dante spent his youth; to the wretched studio in which Michelangelo in his younger days traced the conceptions engendered by his premature genius; to the Palazzo del Podestà, with its black rooms, in which the spectres of the terrible Florentine political life seemed still to linger, and its tall tower, where of old the bell of justice used to ring with a sinister twang, announcing the final agony of those who had been condemned to death, and I left for Venice by the first train in the morning.

The locomotive puffed and smoked between the pleasant hills crowned with cypresses and pines. Honeysuckle and rosebushes were fluttering their gayly coloured garlands along both sides of the track, and throughout the infinite plain, sinking into dales or rising over gentle undulations, like waves of dark green verdure dashing against the forest of olives, spread the famous vineyards which produce the Chianti and other Tuscan wines grateful to the palate, ardent in the stomach, and which saturate one's blood with the perfume of flowers.

Ferrara! The ancient castle of the princes of Este lifts its crown of ruddy towers with crumbling turrets,

resembling the gums of an old mouth, on a pine-covered hill, and there comes to mind at once the recollection of our compatriot Lucrezia Borgia, that diabolical auburn-haired woman with green eyes, as beautiful as temptation, and whose soul never possessed youth.

Here existed the only oasis of tranquil felicity experienced throughout the life of that interesting woman so blackened and calumniated by romantic muse. She was a weak creature, the constant tool of her family, and had she been born in a different atmosphere she would perhaps have been virtuous and benevolent. But she suffered the fatality of having a pope for a father, and the greatest impostors and swindlers of Christianity for brothers, and she assimilated all the passions and corruptions of the period, with that amazing facility for adaptation possessed by woman, for good as well as for evil.

The train continues on its way, leaving behind Bologna with its famous university, its palaces of the ancient aristocracy, and its factories for sausages and *mortadellas.* We pass famous Ravenna and its Byzantine basilica, which holds upon its walls, against a background of gilded mosaics, the attenuated figures of Justinian with his council of legists, and Theodora surrounded by that court of mystic prostitutes who interested themselves in theological disputes. We pass through Padua, enveloped in an atmosphere of sanctity and miracles, still containing in its ancient castle the hideous instruments of torture invented by Angelo, the glowering Paduan tyrant.

The Adriatic is not far away. The lowlands of Il

Veneto lie outspread with such superabundance of fertility as to recall the Valencian Vega.

The fields are planted to vegetables; the women, squatting on the ground, search among the leaves of the strawberry plants; a network of small irrigating ditches extends everywhere, and again and again one sees a *barraca* with its roof of dark straw, lacking nothing but the cross on the top, and the singing of couplets in the doorway with an accompaniment of peculiar neighing cries, to complete the illusion of Valencia.

The fields begin to denote approach to Venice. The marine salts act powerfully upon the soil; the vegetation diminishes; morasses bristling with reeds wherein the frogs are singing their eternal prelude, appear here and there between the cultivated plots until finally we arrive at Mestre, the last station on the mainland on the very shore of the lagoon, and joined to Venice by nothing more than a colossal bridge.

From there, like a blue picture framed by the narrow strip of mainland, by the walls of the station and by its iron roof, the famous city can be seen in the background, the Queen of the Lagoons, rising from the sea like the fantastic cities created by the genii in the Oriental legends by merely blowing their breath upon the waters.

What a spectacle! The little car windows, obstructed by groups of heads stretching their necks in their keen eagerness and enthusiasm, resemble painted altar panels. The few moments that the train stops at Mestre seem eternal; one experiences anxiety, ve-

hement desire, to arrive immediately, as if the bridge might sink at any moment, or the fantastic city dissolve on the blue background as if it were a dream.

A dream! That is the word. One almost doubts its reality on seeing it standing out above the pale green Venetian savanna, gilded by the sun, enveloped in the trembling outlines of a delicate mist, surrounded by islands that are gardens, seeing ever in the distance a broad belt of approaching boats, the five golden domes of Saint Mark's rising into the vibrating ether, the slender campanile with its marble lattices, the hundred towers of its churches, which are museums, the flame-like battlements of the mansion of the doges and their innumerable palaces in which stone, chiselled, embroidered, forming a subtle weave, covers the walls which are painted with that dark shade called "Venetian red." All this, saturated with light, reverberant, rainbow-like reflections, picturing itself in the lagoon with restless reflections, like an immense galley sheathed with marble and gold, rocking upon the quiet waters, is beautiful.

In the distance the black gondolas can be seen passing like insects gliding under the bridges. Midday is greeted with the merry prattle of harmonious bells, as if the tall towers were nests of singing birds; and the fishing smacks return from the outer edges of the lagoon, their square sails spread to the wind, resembling our kites in Valencia at Easter time, with enormous, grotesque, fanciful drawings heavy with red ochre.

We begin to cross the bridge (an artificial tongue

which unites Venice to the coast, and which is the trifle of four thousand meters long) all constructed of marble from Istria and supported by two hundred and twenty-two arches. As it extends across dead waters on which a storm barely produces more than a light ripple, it is only a few meters in height, and from inside the train it seems as if one were travelling on the sea.

Crossing the gigantic viaduct is a matter of a few minutes, and upon seeing its circular patches and the spots where the stone shines white, indicating repairs after its original construction, one can but recall the modern epic during which Venice for the last time gave signs of existence, demonstrating that the valour of her old-time conquerors of the Orient had not become extinguished.

In Venice still exists, vivid and glorious, the recollection of Dandolo, Pisani, and Morosini, of all the doges and illustrious captains of the sea or of the land, who carried the Winged Lion of Saint Mark victorious through Greece and Byzantium; but this bridge of modern construction recalls Daniele Manin, the ardent revolutionary of Jewish origin, with all the thrilling epopee of the Venetian Republic of Forty-eight.

The valour of this nation of sailors, and the temper of soul of its tribune Manin, who, at the very doors of Austria, dared to raise the banner of Italian independence, expelling the conquerors, is astounding. After the momentary triumph, the heroic fall, the tenacious agony, during which no form of suffering, no phase of heroism, was lacking, Manin, a man of letters,

grasping the sword and driving back from the Ducal Palace the weakened populace which, made cowardly by the deprivations of the siege, called for surrender; the viaduct cut, bristling with batteries which replied to the Austrians, who flung a rain of iron upon the city from the coast; a numerous army, a great Armada tightening the blockade, not allowing even a single grain of wheat to be brought into the city where everything must be obtained from without; the Venetians reduced, not to eating horses, for in Venice there are none, but actually to devouring the rats from their wharves, and the noxious little fish from the muddy canals; the hunger and the plague killing more than the Austrian bombs, and yet, in spite of all, the banner of the Venetian Republic floating above the dome of Saint Mark's for six months. Finally, deserted by everyone, he brought the tragic resistance to an end, and one day Paris learned that she had within her walls an emigrant named Daniele Manin, a tribune in his own country, ex-dictator and absolute master of the city which contains the most artistic riches, who now, in order to earn three or four francs teaching Italian, walked leagues every day protected from the rain and snow only by a worn and shabby frock coat.

Gentle Manin, simple and heroic soul, disinherited patriot, who by his deeds gives the lie to the rapacious instinct of the Israelitish race! During his moments of trial he revealed the impetuous valour of the Maccabees; in misfortune he was great and virtuous as one of Plutarch's heroes, and Venice has done her duty by erecting a beautiful statue in one of her squares and

inclosing his remains, and those of his wife and daughter, who died during their exile, in a marble sarcophagus borne by lions, in the Piazzetta dei Leoni on the north side of St. Mark's, under the arch of the transept.

One enters the station of Venice and descends from the train filled with a certain emotion, as if the walls were theatre curtains which, on being rung up, would reveal a magic sight. What can there be on the other side of that door which is obstructed by porters, employés of the different hotels, and the rest of the tribe that comes down to meet travellers?

I asked for the Hôtel del Cavalletto and a little stage sailor, white and blue, with a red sash and a straw hat with long streamers stepped from the crowd and picked up my valise. We are getting along finely! Scarcely have I passed through the station door than I must stop at the head of a marble staircase against which a green limpid water, seeming in the sunlight to be filled with bands of restless golden fish, laps with a gentle swish.

We are in the Grand Canal, and an entire floating town of gondolas rocks up and down, awaiting the travellers. These are the omnibuses, the cabs, that await the new arrival to take him to his house. The curved gondolas touching the water only in the centre, advance their iron prows with comb-like teeth, far out upon the sidewalk. Through the little windows of the black cabins the interior can be seen, the satin cushions, the silk cords. The boats belonging to the hotels, which resemble ships, display their gilded re-

liefs and the great lanterns of their cabins in the sunshine. The barges of the department of health, those of the itinerant venders loaded with cabbages, lettuce, with wood, or with meat, sweep past like arrows shot from the bow; and along the sidewalk swarm the gondoliers dressed with all the variety which the art of the operetta tailor has managed to conceive for the chorus of sailors: red caps, striped blouses, hats of varnished leather or of straw, and girdles, either tightly bound about the waist, or loose and floating, with fringes of silver.

The silence, that silence for which Venice is famous, is the first thing that appeals to the ear accustomed to the rattle of wheels in other great cities. Occasionally some person crosses the marble bridges that traverse the entrance to the aquatic streets. The two beautiful rows of palaces along the Grand Canal, with their closed windows, seem to be sleeping. The monotonous cries of "Ohé!" "Ziá!" uttered by the gondoliers as they turn a corner is the only sound to break the majestic calm.

Evidently the proprietor of the Cavalletto must be the victim of the *jettatura*. The coral horn he wears upon his stomach, hanging from his watch-chain, avails him not. I am the only guest arriving to-day, and, as I settle myself back in the great cabin like a doge on board the *Bucentaur*, the handsome gondola starts on its way, reflecting its gildings upon the waters and meeting along the tortuous lanes, under every bridge, a ferryboat filled with merry devils who, disguised with ribbons and gold lace, to the sound of guitars and

violins, sing, dance, and gesticulate like madmen, extending welcome to the traveller, never forgetting to reach out the sack on the end of a pole so that he may drop in a pair of sous.

It is the tail of the Venetian Carnival that still wags.

XXXV

THE VENETIAN PEOPLE

IN all history there is no example of a fall so painful as that of Venice. Were it not for her beauty, for the charm to be found in her amphibious life, this city would be as dead as Pisa, and her aged palaces, converted into nests for rats and bats, would resound to nothing but the footsteps of an occasional curious artist.

All has become extinguished: the power of the city, and the famous families that used to compose that Venetian patriciate with which princes and kings, lacking money or needing ships, had no scruples to intermarry.

As the city lost its possessions in Crete, Cyprus, and Morea, one after another of the powerful personages who from the interior of their palaces, with their cellars crammed with gold, and a veritable merchant marine scattered throughout the entire Mediterranean, disputed over the question of assuming the horned mitre of gold and the brocaded mantle of the doges, died without succession. From that interminable catalogue of Dandolos, Foscaris, Candianos, Contarinis, Falieros, Tiepolos, Gradenigos, Mocenigos, Bembos, and Cornaros, invincible mariners or learned diplomats, to-day there remains but a single Morosini as a representative of the decayed glory of Venice, who

worthily leads a bored existence in the interior of his beautiful palace, like a grandee as proud of his parchments as he is lacking in money, with no other consolation than to be able to contemplate the portraits of his six ancestors who were doges and who married the sea as a sign of perpetual dominion.

The Foscaris, another famous branch of Venetian nobility, became extinguished not long ago in the persons of two octogenarian ladies, deaf and nearly blind, who lived almost without furniture and without bread in the vast saloons of their forebears filled with artistic treasures which they dared not venture to touch, so dominated were they by respect for the glorious past.

To-day this palace with its artistic lattices and balustrades in which the marble is turned into subtle filaments, like impalpable sighs of stone, as is seen in other dwellings of the Venetian patriciate, have become the property of old lumbermen from the United States, or of cotton manufacturers from London, who desire to own a house here where they can spend fifteen days or so in the winter, and after their dessert, drunk with beer and sherry, can stretch themselves out on a divan brought home by a Dandolo or a Morosini from conquests in the Orient.

In order to form a correct idea of the power and grandeur of that republic it is necessary to spend many hours in St. Mark's, in the Ducal Palace, or in the archives of the state.

An exodus of fugitive families fleeing before the hideous invasion of Attila sought refuge in the Adriatic lagoons in the early part of the 5th century, and

two centuries later the Venetian republic came into existence with its first doge, whose name was Paolo Lucio Anafesto.

The new nation saw before its eyes the green Adriatic, which is the highway to the Orient, and they proposed to make it theirs, until the day might come when the doge should fling his nuptial ring to the waves as docile and submissive wives. Istria and Dalmatia, all the eastern shore of the Adriatic, fell into the power of the Venetians, who, clad in iron, standing in the prows of their red-painted galleys, aspired to the conquest of the ancient world, as if they were the inheritors of Rome. The ungrateful and salty soil of the lagoons produced nothing, and barely yielded them sufficient space for their dwellings. For them their bread was in the sea, and after the ship of war, which terrified and conquered, came the commercial galley, serving as purveyors to the rest of Europe, and they took possession of the gold of all the nations in exchange for the silk, the spices, and the perfumes produced in the Orient.

The mad adventure of the crusades cemented its power. The Venetians were the carriers charged with bearing to the Holy Land the fervour of religious extermination which was aroused in all the nations in response to the voice of the popes, and they knew how to collect both going and coming for their services, becoming virtually the absolute masters of the ports of Palestine conquered by the valour of the crusaders.

The Republic had a Cid, called Enrico Dandolo, who took possession of Constantinople and set up for

many centuries the flag of St. Mark in Negropont, Crete, and the greater part of the Grecian archipelago. The jealousy of her rival Genoa, the Venice of the Mediterranean, produced the sanguinary wars of Jaffa and of Chioggia; but recovering from those disasters, she developed audaciously on the mainland, making herself mistress of the province of Treviso, and of the states of Padua and Brescia. What a period of greatness! Venice appears in history as clever and powerful as modern England. Her ships dominated the sea; the gold of all the world flowed into the Ducal Palace; the Venetians devoted themselves absolutely to commerce, realising that the money of the merchant is the most invincible weapon, and they left the care of defending the Republic to a volunteer army, splendidly recompensed, in which figured the most audacious adventurers of the world.

Her dominion, the incomparable strength of her marine, the astuteness of her famous diplomats, were felt everywhere. Before a king communicated his thought to his courtiers, it was already known in the tenebrous conciliabules of the Palace of the Doges. The Council of the Most Serene Republic settled European policies as best suited its convenience. It compelled the kingdom of Cyprus to be ceded by Catherine Cornaro; it ordered the League against Charles VIII of France, conqueror in Naples, and its dangerous policies so held the attention of the world that the League of Cambrai was formed, with no other object than to ruin and to crush that haughty nation of negotiators out of Europe.

But a revolution in geography accomplished what could not be achieved by land by the emperor of Germany, the king of Spain, and the king of France.

Spain discovered America; Portugal found the road to the Orient by way of the Cape of Good Hope, and it was the Iberian Peninsula that gave the death-blow to the England of the Middle Ages.

The Oriental riches took other routes; the ships abandoned the ancient seas; new ports appeared, attracting the wealth and activity of men; and the death-agony of Venice lasted for two centuries, while she slowly lost all her conquered possessions in the Mediterranean. The lion of St. Mark, consumptive, bald, and now lacking the vigour to growl, lies sleeping in the shadow of the ancient palaces in which the glorious generations gradually became extinguished until, finally, the troops of the French Republic entered the historic city without firing a shot, and the youthful General Bonaparte compelled the last of the doges, Lodovico Manin, to descend from his throne, who, clad in the historic mantle and wearing the horned mitre of gold, ironbound to tradition, and without power to oppose, presented the aspect of a phantom in modern Europe.

This nation, which was for centuries a superb association of millionaires, never allowed itself to be so dominated by the prose of business as to turn its back upon art. The atmosphere of beauty, of dreamy idealism, which seems to envelop the Queen of the Lagoons, wrought its influence upon the traders and

shopkeepers, who, upon looting conquered towns, took care to bring the works of art to Venice.

It is true that they trampled upon the most beautiful historic traditions, but they did so under the guise of the exigencies of war.

Upon the conscience of ancient Venice lies the ruination of the Parthenon. While the Doge Morosini was laying siege to Athens an unerring cannon ball fired the powder magazine that the Turks had established in the Parthenon, and the air was filled with flying fragments of the marble carved by Phidias and Praxiteles, which, had it not been for this catastrophe, would still be extant, with the marvellous solidity of these works of antiquity. But Venice has merits so great that history may forget this crime against art. The famous Venetian School, with its seductive works, representing the idealisation of carnal beauty, is enough. Here Titian was born, he who painted splendid feminine beauty as no other has ever done; here Tintoretto, with his gloomy religious scenes; Paolo Veronese, a worldly artist, whose brush is a lyre seeming to intone an interminable hymn to the beauty of the flesh; and in the very 18th century, when the white wig suffocated thought, when the heart of the artist ceased to beat beneath the gilded coats, and the world had sunk into absurd mannerisms, there arose here a Tiepolo, who, singly and in his own person, constituted a complete Renaissance, anticipating modern painting by a century.

Glorious city, which, in the interior of her palaces and in her piazzas, makes stone take forms whose

beauty rivals the charm that seems to float above the lagoons! Wonderful metropolis, which possessed architects capable of creating these marvellous mansions which modern art never wearies of reproducing, and which had her churches painted, from foundation to dome, by a brilliant procession of artists filling a whole century, who proudly entitle themselves the Venetian School!

Even the people here are better than in the rest of Italy. The gondoliers, slender, with ruddy complexions and handsome blond moustaches, seem to hold a consciousness of their glorious past, and wish not to besmirch it with servile officiousness. They display the grave and affable courtesy of our old-time hidalgos; they are frank and incapable of imposing upon the stranger; in their entire make-up, graceful and serious, there is as much of the Spaniard as in their sonorous dialect, which consists of as many Castilian words as Italian.

And the women? It is a consolation to reach Venice after a journey throughout the rest of Italy.

I was about to enter the Piazza of St. Mark when I met a woman on a bridge. She was the first I had seen in Venice, and I experienced the greatest surprise on seeing her coiffure with its pointed knot, with curls over the forehead, the Canton crêpe scarf crossed over her bust, the fringe almost dragging on the ground; her skirt black and floating; her step short and graceful, her tiny feet daintily shod, and her arms moving with an effect of feminine martialism purely Spanish.

For a moment I thought I was in Madrid, in the

very Calle de Toledo, or at the door of the Tobacco Factory. She was exactly, in type and in jauntiness, a forewoman of the shop; and perhaps she was, for the principal manufacturing of tobaccos in Italy is here, and nearly all the Venetian girls of the working class are cigarette-makers. In the first moment of surprise I took her for a Spanish woman, but, after I had walked a short distance, I met dozens of airy black shawls, of coiffures *a la chula,* and of beautiful little feet with airy tread.

The Venetian women are short, plump, and attractive, with great black eyes and the pallor of brown rice, set off by black patches. They themselves declare that they are much like Spanish women, and they say it with pride, taking satisfaction in the resemblance. They allow their little childish voices to be heard in the streets with perfect freedom; they are aggressive; they respond to gallantries with a purely Madrilenian wit; they jest merrily at the Austrian travellers with their plumed chapeaux, and at the Englishmen with their bare calves; yet, notwithstanding this frankness, Venice is undoubtedly the Italian city in which the least corruption exists.

I entered the Piazza of St. Mark, and the celebrated pigeons of San Marcos attracted my attention before I was aware of the famous monuments that inclose its lower end. They are there by the thousands, with their black plumage, and their restless collars emitting metallic reflections, springing upon the marble pavement like a swarm of insects, fluttering from one end of the piazza to the other, flying up to rest on the

reliefs of the palaces or lighting in a close-packed squadron upon the first person who appears and offers them bread-crumbs or a handful of maize.

Few creatures possess more absolute consciousness of their liberty and their rights. They know that they are the lords of Venice, that nobody will dare to outrage traditional respect by doing them the slightest harm, and they leap confidently between the feet of the passers-by, clutch hold of one's pocket, and thrust in their heads to see whether there is anything eatable in them; they perch calmly upon the shoulders of the ladies, caressing their beautiful faces with the endearing cajolery of the libertine, or they plant themselves upon your hat, rigid and erect with outspread wings, giving you the appearance of one of those paladins of the Middle Ages who wore helmets crowned by fantastic birds.

Venetian tradition declares that the pigeons lent valuable services to the Doge Enrico Dandolo during the siege of Crete, and from that time dates the affectionate hospitality conceded by Venice to these birds as a mark of gratitude. Every afternoon at two o'clock a window of the palace of the Procuratie Veccie opens, and these winged Bohemians come in bands and devour a sack or more of maize, which formerly used to be paid for by the Signoria and now is presented to them by the municipality in order that the ancient custom may not be lost.

But for them this is only their lunch, for in addition they count on the foreigners, the ladies and children, who never pass through the Piazza of St. Mark with-

out filling their hands with maize and laughing like mad at finding themselves covered from head to foot by a cloud of feathers, of pink bills, of rosy feet that fasten to one's clothing with the confidence of petted children whose pranks are always well received.

I looked with envy upon this troop of gay Bohemians which has the whole of Venice for its house, and which salutes all who come with the caress of its insatiable appetite.

What a beautiful life! One's daily pittance assured in excess; attractive raiment, as fine as silk, which never tears; absolute security from being molested by anyone; the most beautiful and poetic vagrancy; an alcove in every hollow of the ornamental battlements of the Palazzo Ducale, with one's sleep lulled by the breeze of the Adriatic and the murmur of the lagoon; for a home the most beautiful of cities; for tablecloths, gloves of Russia leather, or hands of nacre, beringed with diamonds, and absolute liberty to kiss all the pretty little English ladies or statuesque German women who seem to have escaped from a Rubens painting, who throw back their golden locks and roll up their eyes with tremulous abandon upon feeling the bill tickling their lips.

What more could one ask? Therefore, from this time forward, in case I should sometime return to this world where life is an interminable series of moral crimes committed in order to conquer the peseta, I beg whoever is in charge of arranging these things to bear me in mind, reserving for me a place among the doves on the Piazza of San Marcos.

XXXVI

THE BASILICA OF SAN MARCO

CONQUERING nations have ever unconsciously adopted the arts of the peoples to whom they have carried their dominating arms.

Just as, in the monuments of ancient Rome, it seems that, over and beyond the marble, one can catch glimpses of the exquisite serenity of classic Greece, so in all the buildings of Venice the sumptuousness of the Byzantine Empire is revealed, combined with the graceful and delicate curves of the Arabic architecture.

The Venetian nation repaired to the Orient in search of its styles and its monuments, to that Byzantium where the Empire, lingering in an amazing state of phthisis for ten centuries, held in store the recollections of classic art.

The Most Serene Republic, which, notwithstanding all its glories, was in reality a nation of pirates, possessed of a most skillful hand for taking possession of the beautiful things she found in the conquered countries. San Marco and the Palace of the Doges were built by the demolition of Constantinople. There is not a statue, a capital, a column in them that was not brought from Byzantium in the conquering ships, and the Venetian architects, attempting to invent a style in which they might utilise fragments proceeding from

ancient monuments, necessarily could not fail to be influenced by the looted art, as well as by those Oriental palaces, which Marco Polo and other explorers connected with Venetian commerce described upon their return from their audacious journeys through mysterious Asia.

An exquisite sight is presented by the Basilica of St. Mark, closing in the lower end of the beautiful quadrangular Piazza, which is surrounded by one hundred and twenty-eight marble arches.

At one side stands the campanile, absolutely isolated, a gigantic structure of the 10th century, terminating in a pointed roof of black marble that covers the gallery of the bells. From this a fine view of Venice is obtained, with its expanse of red-tiled roofs, which seem to be the scaly shell of an immense turtle floating upon the dead waters; the lagoon everywhere, with its intense green tone; the islands protecting the city like a dike of gardens, and in the distance the Adriatic, dashing with foam-crested waves against the sandy banks of the Lido.

In front of San Marco stand the *pili*, three flagstaffs of prodigious height, on which the banners of the Republic were hoisted during the great festivals, supported by pedestals of bronze with allegorical reliefs commemorating the conquests of Venice.

And finally the Basilica, in all its Byzantine splendour, with its profusion of Oriental marbles, ancient carvings and sculptures of the Middle Ages, bronzes and mosaics, and the gold that seems to be dripping everywhere.

Seen from a distance, with its marvellous filigree-work, its dazzling brilliancy, its incrustations of thousands of colours, and the needles and domes with which it is finished, it has the appearance of a gigantic reliquary of gold chiselled by superfluously exact artists, to be worn on the breast of the wife of Micromegas.

The five Moorish arches forming the façade are sustained upon fascines of slender columns of exquisite marble, while in the deep shell of the semicircles appear various passages of the life of St. Mark, astonishing mosaics of tiny pieces, on which the figures stand out against a gilded background with the same appearance of life as if painted by great masters. A marble balustrade runs along the top of the arcades. Above this loom the bulging ogives of the five gilded pediments containing a multitude of brilliant figures. The statues on its finials alternate with pointed needles sheltering nine saints between decorated voussoirs, and the monument terminates with five double domes of pure Arabic profile, having at their top, in guise of weather-vanes, little gold masts that seem to be burning and sparkling in the sunlight.

In the vestibule the astonishing pictures in gilded mosaic reproducing scenes from the Old Testament are again found. The doges of the early times of the Republic are revealed rigid and frowning above their sarcophagi with forms of marble worn and yellowed by the centuries, and the doors of the temple shine in the penumbra with the glitter of a bronze that resembles gold.

Were it not for the shining pictures in mosaic in

the interior, for the world of little figures covering the pilasters, climbing along the walls, and spreading over the domes, one would think himself in a great mosque. There is not a single window. The light sifts in through the crown of openings in the domes, and the columns of alabaster, of jasper, and of marble, of a caramel-like transparency, sustaining gracefully curving cuspated arches, give the impression that San Marco is a mosque in Constantinople.

Its Oriental origin is revealed in all the splendours of the temple. Half the Basilica of Saint Sophia was brought by the Doge Enrico Dandolo after the conquest of Byzantium, and as riches easily won are the soonest scorned, those rapacious sailors set the most precious stones in the pavement of their temple, and even to-day one walks upon rosettes of lapis lazuli or of malachite, that resemble liquid emerald.

It is only necessary to see the famous Pala d'Oro, the custodial presented by the doges, and which is exhibited during occasions of great solemnity, to understand the scorn with which those masters of the sea treated gold and precious stones. It is four meters in width by one and a half in height, and is a veritable little house of gold, within which a man could easily sleep with comfort. All the known precious stones, from the diamond to the emerald, and from the pearl to the ruby, figure among the carvings of the little golden columns, or did so before the exigencies of the country and rapacious invaders laid hand upon them.

When one stops to think of the wealth and the sumptuousness of that Republic which had reached the

state of greatest splendour that a nation could desire, the imagination becomes confused.

The coronation of a doge in this Oriental temple must have bedazzled one's eyes with a vertigo of colours. The Venetian patricians, enveloped in their long togas of damask and ermine; the young noble with his Moorish helmet adorned with a stiff plume, the family coat of arms embroidered on his chest, his fine silk chemise puffing out around his waist and through the openings at the shoulders and the elbows, with legs of different colours ending in a pointed buskin; the beautiful maidens dressed in white, wearing crowns of flowers, forming an escort of angels round about the dogaressa, motionless as a Byzantine virgin beneath her golden cap, with her dazzling gown covered with heavy embroidery in high relief; the beautiful matrons, their hair dyed the famous Venetian blond, displaying their chests of pearly transparency through the low necks of their black velvet tunics, caught up at one side by the net in order to show the long underskirt of red silk; the captains in the service of the Republic, Spanish hidalgos, exiled from their country because of love affairs and stabbing affrays, French or English adventurers ejected from their castles through poverty and ambition, haughtily raising above their graved Milanese cuirasses their shaven heads, with audacious eyes and aquiline noses standing out prominently; the members of the Council of Ten, spreading terror round about them with the fixed stare of the inquisitor; the heads of the Council of Three, sniffing the atmosphere with their astute mien, as if

detecting eternal conspiracy in the air; down at the end, upon his throne of gold, motionless and serene as a god, as if almost crushed by the horned miter, his beard resting upon his royal mantle, the Lord of Venice, the doge, he who seems to be absolute master of the Republic, but who, nevertheless, even in his dreams sees the patriciate which envies him preparing the dagger and the poison for his undoing, or the Inquisition of the State, that spies upon him, taking note of his acts and sounding his very thoughts.

Now the brilliant procession appears. Before the Ducal Palace round about the two historic columns, gigantic monoliths of green and yellow marble brought from Palestine to sustain on their summits the Winged Lion of St. Mark and a statue of St. Theodore, crowd the Venetian populace, a commingling of peoples of all races and origins. The sons of the lagoon, barefooted, almost naked, their red caps hanging down around their necks, waving aloft their hands calloused by the oar; the soldiers of the galleys, speaking all manner of dialects; the Jews, with their silver-grey gowns, and great purses, shrinking and humble, suffering the scorn of the multitude with a forced smile; the Turkish traders, with their tunics of striped silk and their turbans as enormous as cupolas; and the bailiffs and spies of the Council of Ten, who slip in and out through the crowd, as cautious as serpents, on the alert for any imprudent word that might serve to send a new victim across the Bridge of Sighs.

Beside the Riva degli Schiavoni rocks the *Bucentaur*, the Ducal barge: a veritable floating palace with its

sides covered with branches of gold, and its decks sustained by nymphs and caryatides reflecting its double cabins in the green depths of the lagoon. Below, the galley slaves bending over their red oars, ready to cleave the tranquil waters; above, in the shade of the purple awnings, the nobility seated in a double row, gazing at the doge, who occupies the high throne in the stern. The thousand claws of the gilded monster move, the heavy ship sets forth with gently nodding prow, the people burst into acclamations, mingling their cries with the pealing of the bells and the thundering of bombards and culverins from the anchored galleys; until, at the entrance to the lagoons, the august representative of Venice, risen to his feet, solemnly tossed his ring to the waves, espousing himself with the sea, so that she might for ever be the obedient servant of the Venetian people.

To-day the Basilica of San Marco is sad and silent, and in the presence of the interminable rosary of travellers and artists who set up their easels upon the rich pavement to copy some suggestion of its original beauty, it seems to shrink with the smile of a widow.

She no longer has warlike doges or conquering admirals to deck her with lamps of gold wrested from Byzantine temples and Saracen mosques. Many of her ancient riches have disappeared, and only as a souvenir of that conquering rapacity that embellished her does she preserve, above the entrance archway, on the edge of the marble balustrade, the four famous horses of gilded bronze, which are the most correct and beautiful models of hippic statuary.

Those horses, which for centuries have been lifting up their fore feet on heights to which the pigeons rise so easily in flight, are the only representatives of their race in Venice.

Should it occur to anyone here to have a coach, he would be compelled to ask that St. Mark grant the loan of his two stallions, and that he take the trouble to work a miracle and make them whinny.

Famous horses! One might easily imagine that these bronze animals cannot move, yet nevertheless they have done more travelling than an Arabian steed, or a colt of the pampa, and they well need to rest a few centuries before starting off again on a new gallop.

Nero made them to adorn the summit of the arch of triumph raised in his honour. Constantine, on moving the imperial seat to the Orient, took a fancy to them, and setting spur to them, took them to Byzantium. There they dozed tranquilly to the murmur of the theological disputes, seeing how friars and lay members came to blows or beheaded one another over the question of the Holy Trinity, or whether God is Christ, until along came the Venetians, and, grasping them by their bridles, dragged them to the shore of the Adriatic, erecting their stable at the level of the dovecotes. And when the habit of seven centuries had caused them to conceive an affection for the rose-coloured capitals into which their gilded feet are firmly thrust, Napoleon appeared, driving them with the butts of his rifles along the road to Paris, until, in eighteen hundred and fifteen, while diplomats were arguing in Vienna upon the fate of the fallen Cæsar, the sculptor

Canova started them on their return to Venice, which considered itself dishonoured without its horses.

And here they are, resting majestically after their travels, with their necks curved, their feet aloft, and their noses inflated by a whinny that never issues, contemplating from their height the European pilgrimage that files through the Piazza of San Marco; tranquil, yes, but bereft of security against starting on new journeys within a couple of centuries, for perhaps they feel a presentiment that the time is coming when America will swallow Europe, and the conquerors will compel them to step down from their pedestal, in order to trot them over to some monument in Chicago or Buenos Aires, converted into an Anglo-Saxon city.

XXXVII

THE PALACE OF THE DOGES

JUST as the Basilica of St. Mark, with its sumptuous exterior, recalls the greatness and the conquests of the Venetian people, the Palace of the Doges, which lifts its severe mass beside the temple, occupying one whole side of the Piazzetta, forces a realisation of the incomparable power exercised over the city by the magistracy of the Republic, with its dark Councils and its tribunals with their inquisitional policies, characteristic of a nation that existed in perpetual conspiracy.

The Palace of the Doges forms a chapter by itself, and a most brilliant one, in the history of architecture. No other monument in the world possesses the slightest claim to family connection with this one.

It is beautiful; its ivory-tinted marbles and rose-coloured mosaics glow in the sunshine; its white lambent battlements are reflected like ripples of nacre in the undulating waters by the Riva degli Schiavoni. Round about the carved stone branches and the statues, there still seems to float the echo of the serenades and of the gallant dialogues of the sumptuous festivals of the doges, where the blond dames made trysts with the pages who appeared beneath their windows in dark gondolas, with the mandolin beneath their capes and the silk ladder wound around their bodies. Never-

theless, despite its attractive appearance, the edifice has in it something gloomy and terrifying, as if revealing that in its interior, adjoining the gilded salons, are the dismal chambers of the Council of Ten; above, on a level with the eaves, the stifling calabooses known as the Leads; and down below, on a level with the water, oozing moisture from every one of its rock-pores, the dark wells, the Moorish dungeons from which the unhappy conspirator bade final farewell to light and to life.

The palace seems almost aërial, sustained as are the outer walls by rows of columns.

On the ground floor extends the long arcade of solid and undecorated pointed arches, supported by short and very heavy shafts; and above this runs a second loggia of lighter and more slender columns which gracefully carry rosettes, where the stone, carved and hollowed with as much ease as if it were white plaster, resembles the delicate crochet-work of a schoolgirl.

Upon this light foundation, which resembles the base of some fantastic mansion seen in dreams, rests the body of the palace, a severe mass of red brick with no other openings than a row of ogival windows destitute of decorations, and a balcony simulating an altar, embellished with figures and foliage, whose triple finial rises far above the roof.

Pietro Basseggio, Felippo Calendario, and other Venetian architects who participated in the construction of the Palace of the Doges, conceived the genial caprice of inverting the orders. The light construction, the airy forms, the loggias, which usually appear in the

upper portion in order that their beautiful contours may stand out against the limpid sky, remain below, while the heavy portion, the crushing mass, that which should serve as a foundation, is piled upon them, constituting an architectural miracle that astounds one at first sight.

The entrance is through the Porta della Carta; on the dome is the figure of the Doge Foscari kneeling before the Lion of St. Mark, a fabulous animal which extends its eagle-like wings, lifts its head encircled by a celestial nimbus like the saints, and crushes with its claws the open pages of the Gospel. One crosses the grandiose court with its two bronze cisterns and the double gallery of white columns, over whose balustrades the soldiers of the doge once used to peer, the gondoliers of the Council, the inquisitorial bailiffs, all that swarm of soulless mercenaries that held Venice within its grasp, spying upon even the humblest citizen, and one reaches the famous Scala dei Giganti, or Giant's Staircase, with the two colossal statues of Mars and Neptune, the tutelary gods of the maritime and warlike city, and its great landing, bespattered often by blood, or again strewn with the flowers and myrtle of the coronation festival.

Famous staircase! When the Venetian magistracy left the Sala dello Scrutino, or Voting Hall, the fortunate noble whose name had just issued triumphant from the gilded urn was conducted to this landing. Trumpet blasts resounded throughout the courtyard; the multitude swarmed about, eager to know the name of the new doge, the patricians crowded around the windows

of the galleries with eager curiosity, the velvets and the silks, the Oriental jewels and the golden veils glistening in the sunshine; the newly elected noble appeared on the landing, laying aside the red toga of the simple member of the Senate; the brocade gown fell upon his shoulders; he felt on his forehead the weight of the horned bonnet of gold with the diadem of precious stones; the invincible gonfalon of St. Mark was unfurled with great fluttering; the formula of proclamation was called out by the heralds of the Most Serene Republic, and the name of the new doge, Contarini or Cornaro, Dandolo or Morosini, was repeated by the gigantic acclamation of a virile and light-hearted people, who afterward commemorated the event with fifteen days of serenading, regattas, and masking along the Grand Canal, near the Rialto.

But the Staircase of the Giants, with its landing, which the crowd treads to-day with indifference, despite the fact that it records the true history of Venice, also has its black pages, which reveal the ferocity of an aristocratic Republic, fearful lest the most trivial of its rights might be wrested from it, either those for the benefit of the individual or those favouring the whole people.

One cold morning the multitude, silent and bareheaded, gathered around the foot of the staircase, looking at the landing, upon which stood a young man dressed in red with rolled-up sleeves, leaning on an axe that rested upon a block wound with black. A long-bearded old man, froward and with an audacious glance, whom they all knew, appeared on the galleries

followed by a terrifying procession: bailiffs, soldiers, Counsellors of the Ten, and captains of the Republic.

It was the doge, the Lord of Venice, he who a few days before had commanded the entire city, with its formidable squadrons that closed the entrance to the Adriatic, terrifying the Turk in the Orient. Now he advanced with decision; without protest he allowed himself to be divested of his flowery mantle and of the dazzling miter, and sinking to his knees, he laid his head on the block, like any ordinary conspirator, embracing in a glance of hatred the silent Counsellors who had spied upon him, divining his revolutionary thoughts.

Surprises of the future, ever mysterious! On the day of his coronation it would have been difficult for Marino Falieri to believe that seven months afterward he was to die upon that same landing. To-day, as one climbs the straight Staircase of the Giants, he can still seem to see the severed head rolling down, bumping from step to step, with its eyes opened immeasurably wide, while the neck, a mere stump, leaves a trail of blood behind it upon the marble.

By visiting the interior of the palace one comes to understand the artificiality, and even the mockery, of the power of the doges. To the rest of the world they were the Lords of the Republic. The gold coins bore their portraits; the hundreds of ships and the invincible army of Moors and adventurers in the service of Venice obeyed their orders; and yet, there was not a person throughout the entire city so lacking in liberty and initiative as the doge.

For his personal use was reserved but a small part of this palace, which was occupied almost wholly by the Senate and by the Counsellors, who, pretending to enlighten the chief of the State, subjected him to a perpetual espionage.

In the hall called the Sala del Collegio, the doge received the ambassadors, but not for a single moment could he remain alone with them. On both sides of his golden throne extended the exquisitely carved seats of those who composed the Signoria: sixteen men of learning, six members of the Council of Twelve, and three heads of the Quarantia Criminal, those who observed with their astute glances the slightest gesture of the representative of the Republic.

This hall, where the affairs of Europe were discussed with foreign representatives, must have presented an imposing sight.

The walls were hung with sombre Venetian tapestries representing the adventures of Jupiter and Hercules; the ceiling was decorated with famous paintings; the floor was concealed beneath an Oriental carpet, and at the lower end the doge, immovable and serene as a god within his golden vestments, having beside him, in their Gothic seats, as an imposing escort, his counsellors, with their bowed heads, their frowning foreheads, and their subtle glances; some wore red togas trimmed with ermine, others had black tunics, and all were obsessed by the pride of being the true masters of the power of the Republic and of the fate of a man who seemed to be their sovereign.

Petrarch once appeared before the Signoria as an

envoy and defender of the Duke of Urbino, who was in dispute with the Republic, and upon finding himself in the presence of the motionless and august Senate, the impression upon the poet was so great that despite having his argument prepared, he became dumb, needing a new audience before he could collect himself and speak. Like the Gallic soldiers upon appearing before the Roman Senate, the immortal bard thought that he was standing in the presence of an assemblage of the gods.

And this Sala del Collegio is not one of the largest and most beautiful rooms in the palace.

By the famous Staircase of Gold, adorned with the statues of Hercules and Atlanta, one approaches a series of saloons which are veritable museums.

The Sala del Senato, called dei Pregadi, because anciently the Senators must be requested to attend the sessions, reveals walls and ceiling covered with famous paintings by Tintoretto, Titian, and Palma the Younger, in which the League of Cambrai, and the achievements of some of the doges, are commemorated, as well as their patronage of the historians and poets. In the Sala dei Capi are to be seen saints and martyrs painted by Bellini and Bassano, and it was in the chamber of the Consiglio Maggiore, the largest convention hall in the world, that all the nobles of Venice over twenty years of age gathered on the occasion of supreme matters confronting the Republic.

There, traced by immortal brushes, are all the glorious events of Venice. The quarrel between the Emperor Barbarossa and the Pope Alexander III, which

stirred half of Europe and served to increase the power of Venice; the conference of the Pope with the Doge Sebastian Ziani in the Monastery della Carità; the moment when Ziani is about to set forth and the pontificate hands him the blest sword; the naval battle of Salvore, with the imprisonment of Otho; the return of the Doge Contarini, triumphant in the war of Chioggia; the oath of alliance of the Doge Enrico Dandolo with the crusaders in the church of St. Mark; and the assault and surrender of Zara; the two conquests of Constantinople; Dandolo crowning Baldwin Emperor of the Orient; and a thousand other scenes of glory for Venice, all painted by the geniuses of this land who have left so profound an impression on art.

Along the cornice, as if forming a garland of golden heads, extend the portraits of all the doges of Venice, some beardless and with the astute and profound expression of popes; others bearded, with lowering frowns, like ferocious warriors; and in this circular rosary of sovereigns there appears a hollow space, a great black spot, which seems like a funeral cloth, upon which one reads in letters of gold: *Hic est locus Marini Falieri, decapitati pro criminibus.*

The aristocratic Republic, inexorable with those who conspired against her, has not cared to preserve even the portrait of the one who attempted with a *coup d' etat* to annul the power of the inquisitorial Councils, granting participation in political matters to the oppressed people. In reality, his sole crime consisted in desiring that his rule should be truly republican; in wishing to destroy the abuses of a few privileged

families dependent for their power upon the people, who fought and died for the glory of Venice, having no participation in the rewards.

Beyond the Sala del Consiglio Maggiore there still remain the Sala dello Scrutinio, that of the Quarantia Civil, and that of the Scudo, all of them dripping gold from their ceilings and covered with masterpieces.

In the library one admires the famous codices of the 10th century, containing pictures and vignettes with fresh colours and brilliant gildings, which seem to be of recent workmanship. Near these prodigies of patience and scrupulous human labour, revealing the beautiful clarity of their characters and the harmonious regularity of their pages, are the first books printed in Venice, that true cradle of modern printing: Latin or Italian volumes of theology and poetry attesting the art of Aldus Manutius and other famous Venetian printers of the end of the 15th century.

But the most interesting is the hall of the Scudo: a collection of geographic letters recalling the travels of the Venetian explorers who, like Marco Polo, John Cabot, and others, contributed along with their commercial enterprises to the development of science.

These yellow parchment maps, wherein great errors are to be found, possess extreme interest. The outlines of the coasts appear traced with rigidity, and for the better comprehension of the person who looks at them, galleys larger than the continents are floating upon the seas. The mountain ranges are represented by a row of conical sugar loaves, and on the dot of the cities of the interior of Asia, where the fabled

Prester John was supposed to reign, appear painted castles, with elephants, and figures clad in eccentric garb.

One's heart is touched on thinking of the series of dangers faced by those audacious merchants, travelling among savage nations, reaching unknown countries at a period when the civilised world gave not the slightest heed to such matters. One feels gratitude to those men who, although they achieved their audacious explorations through commercial interest, took care upon their return to make public their discoveries for the assistance of nascent science.

In the centre of the hall, occupying the place of honour, is the famous Map of the World drawn by the Camaldolite monk Fra Mauro, in 1457. This bit of paper, with its ill-traced continents, and its crude drawing, has figured somewhat in the fate of the world.

The work of the friar is nothing but the resumé of all that had been seen by the Venetian explorers down to the middle of the 15th century.

The Venetian, Alvisa da Mosto, who discovered the Cape Verde Islands for Portugal, communicated to Fra Mauro his conviction that there existed something more beyond the Ocean, and the *mappa mundi* of the latter served the Florentine Toscanelli as a base for drawing his navigation charts which were bought by the greatest mariners of Europe, and which Columbus carried when he set sail from Palos with his prow turned toward the unknown.

XXXVIII

THE VENETIAN INQUISITION

A COMPATRIOT of ours, a famous writer, once said that during the three centuries of absolutism of the Austrians and Bourbons, the first thought of every Spaniard on getting up in the morning was the Holy Inquisition, pondering over the frightful dilemma: "To burn or to be burnt."

The Venetians found themselves in a similar situation for nine centuries, thanks to the paternal tutelage of the Councils that governed in the Palace of the Doges. It was necessary to denounce or to be denounced, and therefore, aside from the innumerable bailiffs and spies in the pay of the mysterious Council of Ten, it could count upon the aid of all the Venetian citizens converted into *moscas,* who hastened to guess with an astute glance the thought of his neighbour before the latter should subject him to an identical examination.

Nine centuries do not pass in vain, nor do customs die out easily. Therefore in free Venice, in this city of United Italy, the instinctive habit of espionage for personal satisfaction still endures, and a foreigner need stroll but two or three days through the Piazza of San Marco in order to interest the usual habitués, who do

not rest until they have found out who he is, what his name is, whence he came, and whither he is bound.

The lion's mouth was never empty during those times of the terrifying Republic. The stone feline ever had abundant food of infamies and monstrosities, of vile accusations, or frightful calumnies, which it held in its throat until the mysterious hand of the Ten came to collect the folded papers that decided the honour and the life of a citizen.

The Republican revolution of 1848 broke the lion's mouth with the butts of its rifles, and it did a good deed. It was a monument of ignominy for Venice, which recalled the inquisitional power of a haughty aristocracy.

Whenever an envious or vengeful man wished to crush another, the way lay open before him. He would enter the Palace of the Doges, climb to the second story, and on the last landing of the great staircase, near the door of the Sala della Bussola, the antechamber of the Council of Ten, where waited the *Missier grande*, or the captain of the bailiffs with the gondoliers in the employ of the Council, he would find the stone head of the lion with its jaws wide open for the reception of the impeachments.

At eleven o'clock came the representative of the Ten and of the Council of Three, each with a different key, to open the two locks of the fateful letter-box. They would collect the papers, and that same night, while the shadows were invading the tortuous canals, the gondola of the Inquisition would emerge from the darkness like a phantom. The unfortunate man who

had been denounced left home and family to be submerged in the *Pozzi*, or wells, there to remain for years and more years, or, if he ever came out, he issued cold and stiff, wrapped in snowy cerements, through the great door down under the Bridge of Sighs, to be flung into the deep waters near the Lido.

The facility and success of the denunciations excited the minds of those unbalanced persons who caught the delirium of persecution. Each day a new conspiracy, which existed only in the narrow brain of the informer, was discovered; and, in the end, those who were imprisoned through false accusations proved to be more in numbers than the perpetrators of actual crimes. Proof of this is to be found in the fact that during the decline of the Venetian Republic, when the Council of Ten had become an almost fictitious power and was slowly dying of old age, like our Inquisition, the French troops on entering Venice found in the *Pozzi* only four prisoners, and of these two had been placed there for having made false accusations of conspiracy against the powers of the state.

During the flourishing times of the Council of Ten, however, the political prisons were a revolting hostelry that never had rooms to let.

The character of the dungeons where the Most Serene Republic shut up its enemies is startling. To-day the *Piombi*, or Leads, no longer exist; but in order to learn about them it is only necessary to read the tales of Silvio Pellico and of the perverse abbot Casanova, that licentious and audacious adventurer, a typical Venetian of the last century, whose truthful *Memoirs*

resemble those novels whose breathless interest carries the reader through to the last chapter without a pause.

The Leads were the lofts, or garrets, of the Ducal Palace, with no other ventilation than a narrow loophole, and for a ceiling the leaden sheets of the roof. The sun, which, when it shines upon the lagoons, seems to boil the water, converted the framework of the palace roof into plates of fire. The unhappy prisoner, naked, roasted, his skin blistered by the atmosphere of an oven, would vainly endeavour to climb up to the loophole in search of a breath of the hot sirocco of noonday, and the parasites, excited by the heated atmosphere, would devour the skin of the victim without compassion.

By way of contrast to these perpetual braziers are the *Pozzi*, which arouse in those who visit them a sensation of distress and anguish.

Down a winding staircase, along whose turns the head of the stooping visitor bumps against the ceiling at every step, one descends to the subterranean regions of the palace. The light carried by the warden flickers in the gusts of damp and sticky wind. The walls, of gigantic thickness, ooze moisture.

Farewell, life! Farewell, joyous sounds that denote the existence of something! Nothing in here but dismal silence, the solitude of the tomb, the interminable monotony of non-existence! The drop of water trembling on the pores of the stone and falling at last upon the slippery flagstones; the slow "chap chap" of the oar of the gondolier passing beneath the Bridge of

Sighs, who, though separated only by the wall, seems to be rowing many leagues away, are the only things to be heard in this gloomy cavern that calls to mind one of the circles of the Dantesque Inferno.

What horrible agonies have been witnessed by these walls! What frightful shouts of despair must have re-echoed throughout these vaults, low and crushing like those of a tomb!

The calabooses of the political prisoners extend in an interminable row, low and narrow as windows, square dungeons with a curved roof like that of a funereal vault. For a bed a bench of stone and mortar; as a supreme luxury, the better treated prisoners had a tiny lantern by whose dim light they could see the running of the repugnant insects generated in the moisture, and in one corner the pillory and the straps by which the victim had been held during the moment of declaration, while the bailiffs tortured his feet in the iron stocks, or made his bones creak with the atrocious screws.

In one of these dungeons Marino Falieri awaited the moment of his torture. He who but a few days before had possessed the golden throne of the doges as his seat, now stretched his body upon the damp couch of stone, and upon seeing that his judges had to bend in order to enter the narrow throat of the dungeon, he smiled with satisfaction, thinking that even in his misfortune the haughty patriciate of Venice was forced to stoop in his presence.

One experiences profound emotion upon visiting

these caverns where once reigned agony and desperation. A few minutes suffice to make the flesh shiver because of the dampness; the lungs become oppressed by the heavy atmosphere; and the eyes are dimmed by the gloom. And to think that in these horrible places were human beings who moaned for ten or twenty years!

Overhead, the Bridge of Sighs flings its graceful arch between the palace and the prisons, its statues, its reliefs, and the marble lattices of its windows reflected in the tranquil canal.

The Bridge of Sighs! What a just and soul-stirring name! One day the unfortunate man who had been lying in the depths of his winding-sheet of stone for many years, seeing nothing but the hand of the gaoler thrusting his pitcher of water and his black bread through the narrow opening, heard a sound of steps and of weapons breaking the profound silence of that world of crypts. They were coming in search of him! The Council of Ten had called him at last! Something awaited him up there so mysterious and so impenetrable that now he looked upon the gloomy dungeon, peopled for so many years with the recollection of those whom he loved, as a place of refuge. His legs, benumbed and swollen, refused to walk. Thin and repulsive as a spectre, covered with rags, his beard long and white even in his youth, he leaned against the bailiffs, almost blinded by the red glitter of the torches.

He climbed and climbed, and as he trod the passage-

way of the inclosed bridge, upon flinging a furtive glance through the stone lattices, all the events of his past life crowded into his mind. He felt what a dead man would feel were he to be brought back to life again during the height of a festival. He beheld Venice gay, smiling, and azure-coloured, lying asleep in the light of the moon; the lagoon filled with restless silver fish; the Riva degli Schiavoni with its gondolas filled with people, rocking and keeping time to laughter and song; the canals with their silent palaces before which the serenade of love rose languid and tremulous; life and youth were being revealed to him through the openings in the stone with the sudden glow of a lightning flash, and the unfortunate man, without strength to weep, would give an anguished sigh that vitiated the atmosphere of beauty and joy with the stench of the prison.

After the alluring visions came a series of horrors. The gloomy passageways, the chamber of the Council of Ten all painted black, with its spectres enveloped in red togas, who questioned him in sepulchral tones; the nearby chamber of torment, where the executioner, regardless that he was interrupting the declarations, greased the wheels and turned them with hideous squeaking; and the open door above the canal, through which the dismal gondola, by the light of torches, received the body in its winding-sheet that had been strangled or broken on the wheel, and which a few moments later is to be thrown by the gondoliers into a place in the lagoon marked by black posts, wherein the

fishermen, under severe penalty from the Signoria, may not cast their nets.

A frightful tribunal that, which in its unheard-of severity did not hesitate even to punish itself, making public its mistakes.

Set in the wall of San Marco, near the entrance to the Ducal Palace, two lights burn every night before a picture of the Madonna containing an inscription in which prayers are requested for the repose of the soul of the "poor baker." This little altar represents one of the traditions of Venice.

One night a young man who belonged to the high aristocracy of Venice was found dead in the Piazetta, adjoining San Marco. The bailiffs could discover nothing by which to prove the author of the crime except a dagger thrust into the breast of the young man, and a baker's apprentice who had been passing and had stopped beside the corpse.

The baker was thrust into the Wells; upon searching his house they came upon a scabbard into which the dagger found in the body fitted perfectly, and although the boy swore his innocence in the presence of the Council of Ten with all the strength of his soul, he was strangled, and his body served as food for the fish in the oozy bottom of the lagoon.

Years afterward a Venetian patrician was dying, and in his last moments he had the Ten summoned and confessed himself as the author of this assassination of the young noble, because he had believed him to be his wife's lover.

The terrible mistake still might have remained shrouded in mystery, but the sinister tribunal preferred to be inexorable even with itself, and made public its error. It declared the innocence of the baker; to perpetuate his memory it set up this interesting little altar, which is a reminder of human injustice, and it gave an order to one of its secretaries that at every session, before pronouncing sentence, he should shout to the Councillors, as if his were the voice of Justice:

"Remember the poor baker!"

Standing in the deserted Piazetta, gazing at this simple altar enveloped in the tender atmosphere of tradition, I thought with bitterness that if all tribunals were as frank and inexorable in confessing their errors as the Council of Ten, the cities would be compelled to set up so many altars that they would resemble churches.

XXXIX

THE LAST NIGHT

A STROLL on foot through Venice is equivalent to climbing the stairs leading to the Eiffel tower.

The narrow alleys with their great eaves, which, even during the day, permit only the pale, dim light of a cellar to filter in, recall the silent streets of the Moorish cities, with their tiny shops where the customers crowd around the door.

Every twenty paces one stumbles against a canal, and he must climb the steep stairs with their audacious arch, whose marble steps, reeking with dampness, present an interminable perspective of falls and neckbreaking. If the visitor were to count the steps to be climbed up or to be gone down, in passing from one end of Venice to the other, he would become dismayed, and would prefer to remain at home.

For this reason the gondola, the only vehicle existing in the city, forms an integral part of the life of every Venetian. Those of the wealthy families are elegant, glossy with varnish, with two oarsmen, who recall the choristers of an operetta when they appear upon the stage dressed as sailors. The less fortunate, the common people, find at every crossing of the canals

gondolas of a single car which give one for fifty centimes what improperly might be called a drive.

A gondola ride in the moonlight through the deserted canals is what best reveals the original beauty of the city of the lagoons.

Leaving the brilliant cafés on the Piazza of San Marco, and going down to the Riva degli Schiavoni, one is attracted by the long row of gondolas gently swaying, with their prows resting upon the sidewalk, the gondolier stretched out on the bottom, gazing at the moon and singing his barcarolles in low tones.

The travellers settle back against the black cushions in the cabin, the gondolier leans over the curving stern, grasping in his hand the oar that seems to be animated and to possess the power of feeling, as if it were a prolongation of his body, and the unloosed shuttle begins to race over the water, in the august silence of the night, with no other sound than the "chap chap" of the oar and the "Ohé!" called out by the boatman to avoid collisions as he turns the corners.

Slowly dark Venice, the Venice lying asleep beneath the caress of the moon, files past—those canals with their fantastic reflections, the desperation of artists who try to reproduce them with the brush.

The interminable row of palaces along the Grand Canal project their masses of shadow on both banks, and from the darkness surge the fascines of big-headed, crudely painted masts which serve for marking the shoals and for tying up the gondolas. From time to time, hanging from one of these posts, is seen a little

Gothic chapel, resembling the lantern of a Venetian galley, and within the round, leaded windows is the little lamp, lighted every night through pity for the gondoliers, whose ruddy reflection breaks into infinite ripples upon the trembling waters, filling the lagoon with fishes of fire.

In the centre of the Canal the moon traces a highway of light along which pass the gondolas with their black oarsmen, each suggesting Charon and his ancient boat on the Styx.

Before some of the palaces sound the melancholy strains of the serenades, and the boats decorated with tiny lanterns hung along their sides, with their cargo of musicians and singers filling the air with harmonies, rock on the waters.

These are the troubadours of Venice, those whom the people traditionally refer to as *pittores*, no doubt because in past centuries the young artist-pupils of Titian or Tintoretto, when they ceased their work in the studio, went out to entertain the beauties of Venice with serenades.

Like the professional serenaders of Madrid, the Venetian *pittores*, who are nothing more than poor strolling musicians, have a list of all the citizens of Venice, and there is no Saint's day or birthday which fails to receive its corresponding serenade, just as on every calm night one of those decorated boats, which are veritable music-boxes, unfailingly stops under the windows of every important hotel.

One imagines himself dreaming, or living in a fan-

tastic world, when he floats along the Grand Canal lying upon the cushions of the gondola. On high the pale, honey-tinted moon softens with its light the brilliant dust of space. The sky, the water, the atmosphere, all blue; and above this Venetian mirror-like background looms the dark city with its palaces resembling sketches in India ink, flecked here and there by red lights. In the mass of shadow, where the restless borders of the water unite with the foundations of slime-covered marble, sounds the merry chattering of violins and citharas, the lament of guitars, and the tenors running over the complicated themes of nautical songs, followed by the voices of the sopranos, full, beautiful, robust, making one think of the Portia and the Jessica of Shakespeare, of all those Venetian women idealised in poetry.

Along these narrow, tortuous canals that seem as if they were of ink, and on which the oar resounds with that tremendous echo heard only in cemeteries and deserted cloisters, at the beginning of the century glided a lame Englishman, beautiful and fine-featured as an Apollo of the Parthenon, mentally composing the verses of a poem which was to be entitled *Don Juan;* and the world learned with amazement that the heartless rake, that Lord Byron who treated the ladies of London so brutally, and enamoured women with the sole object of vilifying and scorning them, allowed himself to be beaten every night by a Venetian baker woman, a superb animal of savage beauty, who, not caring a fig for the glory of the poet, only recognised the worth of his pounds sterling.

Here also, in one of these silent palaces, a German as ugly as the witches of Macbeth used to look from the window, pen in hand, seeking inspiration in the majestic calm of the lagoon, concealing his thick grey locks beneath his velvet cap, a Herr Wagner who came to Venice in quest of repose and isolation in order to write a series of operas constituting the tetralogy of the *Ring of the Nibelung.*

The gondola, gliding through the canals, gains the narrow lane which separates the Ducal Palace from the prisons. In the background the Ponte della Paglia closes the exit to the sea, like a barrier of white marble; in the luminous centre of the Canal the Bridge of Sighs is reflected, with its door on a level with the water, which seems about to open to permit the passing of a corpse.

In the funereal solitude of this Canal which recalls so many crimes, one feels the instinctive terror produced by a cemetery at midnight. It seems as if all the victims of the Council of Ten are about to rise from the muddy bottom to the surface, like an interminable procession of spectres, clutching the sides of the gondola with their bony hands, fastening upon the stranger the fixed stare of their yellow, beclouded eyes, and, with their mouths filled with pestilent clay, intoning in a mighty roar the *Dies Iræ* against the Inquisitorial Venice that assassinated them.

But the cool breeze wafts the echo of the serenades across the network of passageways.

City of exhaustless beauty, of unexpected contrasts, of superb panoramas that ever change with the light

during the course of the day! And to think that scarcely does the day dawn but I must leave you, exchanging the pillow of the voluptuous swaying gondola for a seat in a railway car!

Floating along the canals, I wait until the moon shall turn pale and sink behind the hills on the mainland and the dawn begin to turn blue above the sandy banks of the Lido.

And while awaiting the hour I think of the museums and churches I saw the day before, of the state archives of ancient Venice, with its four hundred halls and its four hundred thousand manuscript volumes containing all the secret information of that Venetian diplomacy which was the greatest in the world, extending its espionage to every court of Europe. There, in the interminable series of oaken cabinets, the records of the knavery of eight centuries are stored; and one recalls, as if they were jewelry showcases, the glass cabinets with their autograph documents by the doges, by Charles V, Francis I, Henry IV, Oliver Cromwell, Gustavus Adolphus, and innumerable firmans by the Grand Turk, bound in brocade and gold.

After Santa Maria dei Frari, the rival church of San Marco, the Pantheon of Venice, with its purely Gothic choir, its colossal mausoleums of doges and artists, where the four gigantic, lusty black slaves sustaining the sarcophagus of Francesco Foscari contrast with the mystic angels and the plaintive flights of sculpture that guard the heart of Canova. On the walls and ceilings are paintings by Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, and Tiepolo, immortal geniuses who, through affection

for their native land, decorated all the churches of Venice.

At last the day begins to break. The stars turn pale, the lanterns on the great ships anchored in the Giudecca Canal begin to flicker out; the clarion-call of the cocks rolls from roof to roof throughout all Venice. The tide runs out; the waters, as they recede, give forth their most acrid odours. Floating across the surface come the gusts of perfumes with which the gardens along the Lido greet the day, which is born like Venus, with rose-coloured veils and crown of pearls, rising from the foam of the Adriatic.

The parting moment approaches, and the gondolier, shaking off the lethargy of early morning, again begins to lash the water with his oar. Farewell, Venice, epilogue in which all the beauties of the great book of Italy are condensed!

The night fades away. This is the hour in which the nightingale stills his song and the lark begins to sing, fluttering his dew-moistened wings; the hour when Romeo and Juliet greeted the coming day with their final kiss. And I, with a glance taking in sleeping Venice, whose golden finials are beginning to glisten in the splendour of the dawn, a faithful lover who never wearies in her arms, give my final embrace to this Land of Art, which seems to grow in beauty at the sound of the caresses of her adorers.

FINIS

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